



*Routledge Research in Early Modern History*

# **LANGUAGES OF REFORM IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY**

## **WHEN EUROPE LOST ITS FEAR OF CHANGE**

Edited by  
Susan Richter, Thomas Maissen, and  
Manuela Albertone



# Languages of Reform in the Eighteenth Century

Societies perceive “Reform” or “Reforms” as substantial changes and significant breaks which must be well-justified. The Enlightenment brought forth the idea that the future was uncertain and could be shaped by human beings. This gave the concept of reform a new character and new fields of application. Those who sought support for their plans and actions needed to reflect, develop new arguments, and offer new reasons to address an anonymous public. This book aims to compile these changes under the heuristic term of “languages of reform”. It analyzes the structures of communication regarding reforms in the eighteenth century through a wide variety of topics.

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When Europe Lost Its Fear of Change  
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## When Europe Lost Its Fear of Change

Edited by Susan Richter, Thomas Maissen, and Manuela Albertone

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*Frontispiece:* Queen Anne accompanied by personifications of the Anglican Church and Reform. Painting by Antonio Verrio, 1703–1705, The Queen's Drawing Room, Hampton Court Palace © Historic Royal Palaces.



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# Preface

The topic of this volume is based on an idea that was born on a late summer night of 2013 in Heidelberg. When talking about our research – especially emerging dissertations and habitations, we realized that reform played a crucial role, but that we actually talked about different reforms and diverse ways of conceptualisations, terminologies, and interpretations of the phenomenon. Thereafter, we invited colleagues from several parts of Europe and different disciplines to join a project about reforms and their languages during the European Enlightenment. One of our starting points was Franco Venturi's oeuvre, which gives a unique perspective on the whole continent, and we were glad to invite experts especially from Italy. Together, we enjoyed an inaugural conference in late 2014 at the German Historical Institute in Paris, a one-week reading class of texts from Franco Venturi's *Settecento riformatore* at the Villa Vigoni (May 2015) on Lake Como, and a retreat for writing and discussing at the Internationales Wissenschaftsforum Heidelberg in August 2016. This volume of case studies and observations about languages of reform during the eighteenth century combines the results our efforts.

We are deeply grateful for the funding of the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (DFG), the Fritz-Thyssen Stiftung, and the German Historical Institute Paris, as well as the hospitable and wonderful atmosphere at Villa Vigoni and Internationales Wissenschaftsforum Heidelberg (IWF). Without their generous support, this project and the emergence of this volume would not have been possible. Our meetings across Europe were organized by Johan Lange, Gregor Stiebert, Erika Lokotsch, and Urte Weeber, to whom we are most grateful. At Villa Vigoni, Director Immacolata Amedeo, Scientific Referee Christiane Liermann, and their team welcomed us with outstanding kindness. Equally friendly were Ellen Peer enboom and her team in Heidelberg's IWF. We would be thankful for the competent assistance of Gregor Stiebert, Sebastian Schütte, Ruby Ellis, Carolyn Jones, and Emily Lippert for language editing. Furthermore, we

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*Susan Richter, Thomas Maissen, and Manuela Albertone*

# Introduction

## Languages of Reform and the European Enlightenment

*Pascal Firges, Johan Lange, Thomas Maissen,  
Sebastian Meurer, Susan Richter, Gregor Stiebert,  
Lina Weber, Urte Weeber, and Christine Zabel*

### How to Depict and Understand Reform?

In his work “Gott. Einige Gespräche” (1787), the German theologian and poet Johann Gottfried Herder (1744–1803) defines progress as a fundamental process in God’s creation of the world: “*Es muss . . . Fortgang seyn im Reiche Gottes, da in ihm kein Stillstand, noch weniger ein Rückgang seyn kann. . . . Keine Ruhe ist in der Schöpfung.*”<sup>1</sup> Therefore, in Herder’s eyes, man was a *homo viator*. It was the *procedere*, the progress, that man had to accomplish on God’s behalf. This notion resonated with the spirit of the times in Western Europe in the eighteenth century. According to Dirk Oschmann, the rhetoric of movement, dynamization, mobilization, and flexibilization has dominated all modern genres of writing ever since.<sup>2</sup> Movement became an interpretation model of European enlightenment and led to a public discourse on the correct understanding of the direction of development: either going forward in a cycle but repeating key elements again and again or going forward in an upwardly winding spiral departing from the old.<sup>3</sup> In the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, one of the most important discourses on the direction of development was the *Querelle des Anciens et des Modernes*. In the *Querelle*, authors critically reflected on tradition in philosophy, literature and aesthetics which resulted in a new understanding of progress. Progress was no longer understood as a continuous surpassing of the achievements of the ancients, but as a comparison of canonized literature and art of classical antiquity with the accomplishments of the present. Thus, progress replaced the humanist ideal of constant role models.<sup>4</sup>

According to Reinhart Koselleck, however, it was not always the discourses but also the gradual, imperceptible change of direction of development that were to be observed by the contemporaries. This shows, for instance, in a new understanding of the interdependence of space and time, or in a new understanding of history as a perpetual process, which replaced the idea of cyclic periodicity.<sup>5</sup> Different understandings of and assertions by different groups of actors *about* “reform” were embedded

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in context of these questions of development and the direction of movement in the eighteenth century.

This volume deals with possibilities and limits of expression concerning reform. Metaphors and allegories mark what was expressible for contemporaries in the second half of the eighteenth century. They point towards contemporary assumptions about actors and the framework of reform. The literary scholar Peter-André Alt suggests that, as a result of the *Querelle*, modernists of the eighteenth century recognized ancient gods only as allegories or metaphors, no longer as existing natural beings. For Alt this allegorical use of antiquity and the is closely connected to the idea of progress. It indicates a departure from the old towards a new interpretation of development.<sup>6</sup>

This volume aims to show such allegorical and metaphorical conceptions of reform in context of written texts accompanying various reform processes. However, this allegorical and metaphorical framework may also be applied to allegorical images of “reform” as the one on the frontispiece of this book. But are these allegorical images of “reform” also implying a departure from the past?

The decoration in the Queen’s Drawing Room at the west elevation mural of Hampton Court Palace that adorns the frontispiece of this book was created by the Neapolitan painter Antonio Verrio (1636–1707) during the reign of Queen Anne (1665–1717), between 1703 and 1705. It shows Britannia surrounded by sibyls, prophets, and other allegorical figures. The personified Anglican Church is placed at her right-hand side, while the elderly woman to her left, wrapped in a white veil and leaning towards Britannia holding an open book has so far been identified as a Sibyl-like figure, or prophetess. More to the point, the figure needs to be identified as a personification of reform.

Verrio took up the iconography originally presented by Cesare Ripa (1555–1622) in the famous *Iconologia ovvero Descrittione dell’imagini universali cavate dall’antichità et da altri luoghi*, a collection of iconographic models for allegories. In her left hand, the personified Reformatio holds a pruning knife, or billhook, a horticultural tool which is used to the present day for fruit tree pruning, to carefully cut back dead or diseased branches. In her right hand, she presents a book with the inscription “Pereunt discrimine nullo amissae leges”, a sentence which refers to Lucanus’ *Pharsalia*, an epic poem on the civil war between Cesar and Pompey:<sup>7</sup> “The laws perish and are lost if one does not make a distinction”. The quote explains that one needs to distinguish between the worthy old elements and their subsequent perversion, and that one has to sever those elements of the law that have been superfluously added over time. In this context, returning to the original roots alludes to the re-establishment of ancient law. Reformatio was thus seen as an act of legislation from above and was linguistically equated with moral correction.



*Figure I.1* Queen Anne receiving homage from the four quarters of the globe. Painting by Antonio Verrio, 1703–1705, The Queen's Drawing Room, Hampton Court Palace.

Source: © Historic Royal Palaces. Photograph: James Brittain.

The quotation also marks the figure as a sibyl, more specifically the Cumaeian Sibyl<sup>8</sup> which, according to Lucan's work, informs the queen of the former prediction of the terrible downfall of Rome by the furor of civil war. The sibyl thus issues a warning about Erichtho, the demonic witch who precipitates the physical, material, and moral destruction of the city of Rome by civil war. Erichtho is a chaotic counter-figure to the gods, whose task it is to maintain order. In Verrio's painting, this divine role is conferred to Queen Anne, depicted as Britannia and thus as an imperial figure.<sup>9</sup> Verrio's painting can be understood as a warning reminder of the English Civil War (1642–1649) and the subsequent conflicts over the role of monarchy up to the Glorious Revolution of 1688. Great Britain is depicted as an early modern version of Lucan's threatened Rome. This implies that the threat of civil war can be dispelled through universal – both ecclesiastical and secular – reform by the monarch. The sibyl's raised pruning knife over Lucan's work is thus an expression of reform action in the medium of the law.<sup>10</sup> Queen Anne needed to be the initiator of reform and thus bearer of the hope to redeem her subjects from the evils of time. Reform was thus set as both instrument and responsibility

of the monarchy, a task that consisted in constantly cutting back aberrations by means of the law.

In 1758, Johann Georg Hertel published his German edition of Ripa's *Iconologia* containing copperplates of the allegories created by the engraver Jeremias Wachsmuth (1711–1771) from Augsburg.<sup>11</sup> Appearing in the form of a plainly dressed elderly woman, Wachsmuth's *Reformatio* holds the billhook and two branches: a flourishing one resulting from a reforming trim and, as a contrast, a diseased one that follows from ignorance and a refusal to act. Accordingly, the knife is the precondition of renewal and a regeneration of strength. In horticultural life, the billhook enables the well-informed professional gardener to cut back ill branches which were previously identified as damaging for the tree as a whole.<sup>12</sup> In political life, the billhook likewise helps to re-establish the simplicity and virtue of laws and customs that have licentiously been neglected, by cutting away the superfluous and reverting to their original form ("si riducano alla lor forma").<sup>13</sup> Ripa attributes the task of restoring lawful observance to any superior and, by referring to the Council of Trent, also includes the authorities of the church. Both Wachsmuth's rear scene and the caption introduce the biblical king Josiah: "*Destruit Iosias iustus, Simulacra Deorum, Rex populisque ferunt, pectora pura Deo*" ("The just King Josiah has destroyed the images of the gods, the king and the people bear a pure breast in God"). Josiah figures in the background of the image, sitting on his throne while banning the worship of visible idols and renewing the Israelite covenant with God, as it is outlined in the second book of Chronicles:

he cut to pieces the incense altars that were above them, and smashed the Asherah poles and the idols. These he broke to pieces and scattered over the graves of those who had sacrificed to them. He burned the bones of the priests on their altars, and so he purged Judah and Jerusalem.

(2 Chronicles 34, 4f.)

It is in this spirit that Wachsmuth's *Reformatio* knocks over the symbols of erring adoration. At her feet, one can identify a golden lamb, an obelisk, a griffin, and the bust of Astarte, each representing a polytheistic cult that was destroyed during Josiah's reform process.<sup>14</sup> In the confessional societies of early modern Europe, Josiah was regarded as an ideal ruler and a just tool of the Almighty who was, in turn, identified as both the origin and the defender of reform. Such reform was understood as a religious undertaking that was oriented towards the past.

Even more so than Verrio's *Britannia*, Wachsmuth's *Reformatio* remained faithful to Ripa's sixteenth-century concept of reform and communicates a rather traditional and conservative understanding of that very process. The billhook and the references to Lucanus as well as to

*Destruit Iosias justus, Simulacra Deorum,  
Rex populusque ferunt, pectora pura Deo.*



Figure I.2 Allegory of “Reformatio”, in J.G. Hertel, ed., *Des berühmten italiäischen Ritters, Caesaris Ripae, allerley Künsten und Wissenschaften dienlicher Sinnbilder und Gedancken* (Augsburg, 1758), Staatliche Bibliothek Passau, Inv.-Nr. Yge 67. urn:nbn:de:bvb:12-bsb11347783-7.

Josiah suggest that the right pathway of reform – one would like to say *still* – led back to an unspoiled and divinely created past. This raises important questions of when, in which situations and to what extent contemporaries began to perceive of reform as an accelerated transformation (political, economic, or social), in such a way that made it familiar to eighteenth-century audiences? How did Wachsmuth's allegorical statement relate to paramount delineations on reform in the eighteenth century? Did other actors, in verbalizing requests of reform, likewise fall back on traditional patterns of justification or did they endeavour to find new arguments or goals of reform? Did their discursive strategies remain firmly attached to messianic edifices of ideas, or did they turn towards a new vision for the future? Certainly, both backward- or forward-looking arguments for reform defended or argued for change. In the eighteenth century, contemporaries were not necessarily convinced of the unspoiled nature of the divine world any longer; many contemporaries were possibly more concerned with the excesses and abuses they themselves observed. Reform(ation), in any case, stood for a break in routines, for concrete changes regardless of how they were conceptualized. One might therefore identify a necessity to communicate such changes in a meaningful manner to the persons and institutions concerned. Both real and imagined changes needed social acceptance, at least if one wished to avoid a permanent tear in the social texture. This, in turn, implies that arguments for reform were crucial components of different communication processes between varying actors and social groups that aimed at improvement or progress. It is the goal of this volume to understand these eighteenth-century processes. After all, is not the Enlightenment the quintessential *age of reform*?

## Reform and Language in Historiography on the Enlightenment

The *philosophes*, the Enlightenment's champions, undoubtedly sought to contribute to a progress that would make humanity and especially posterior generations more erudite, more virtuous, and also happier. This was verbalized by Diderot when he explained the aim of the *Encyclopédie*: “In the future, this work will certainly produce a revolution of the mind, and in this, I hope that all the tyrants, the oppressors, the fanatics and the intolerants will not win. Then we will have served humanity.”<sup>15</sup> Diderot did not express this hope in the official foreword of the *Encyclopédie* but in a private letter to Sophie Volland. He spoke of a revolution that still needed to be prompted and encouraged vis-à-vis the powers of reaction. The Enlightenment was for him thus no self-fulfilling progress, but a struggle against strong opponents, which required strategic skills. Hence, pronouncing the rational truth and preserving it in a written oeuvre such as the *Encyclopédie* was not enough

for Diderot; this revolution of the mind rather needed to be imposed onto the ignorant and the reluctant. Such statements about the necessity to impose reform explains why one should look at these strategies and arguments employed in those various *battles* for reform. In short, instead of predominantly looking at the texts by the *philosophes*, we suggest to look rather at the different sets of arguments and strategic tools employed (in favour of reform) by different individual or collective actors. We thus propose examining different *languages of reform* in the eighteenth century.

In the 2014 *Cambridge Companion to the French Enlightenment*, British historian Daniel Brewer highlighted the relationship of Enlightenment and reform when he assessed:

The Enlightenment designates not a past moment but a goal to be realized, a programme reflecting the desire to reform and regulate individual behaviour and collective social relations. Reformist, progressivist, and emancipatory, the Enlightenment project is fundamentally future-oriented, even to the point of seeming impossibly utopian. Rising up on a constantly receding horizon, it represents a worthy goal, yet perhaps a constitutively and forever unrealizable one.<sup>16</sup>

Brewer presents the Enlightenment of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries as one stringent movement that reflects on the present in projecting a rationally imaginable, ideal future.<sup>17</sup> In this interpretation, it was the *philosophes'* intention and ideal that inspired their political, cultural, societal, and economic writings. This ideal, as well as the constant engagement with the question of what the future could be and how change could be brought about, should thus be deeply ingrained in the language of Enlightenment contemporaries. Conversely, the past always loomed large and was in turn historicized or potentially depreciated. Enlightenment thus constituted and constitutes a discourse (in the Foucauldian sense) that constantly reformulates a tension between a projected future and a present that is in turn identified with a (more or less) depreciated past. It is this productive tension that Brewer and others see as the lasting contribution of the historical Enlightenment – and hint at a *project of Enlightenment* that goes on to this day. The tension between the imperfect *now* and the idealized *then* creates dynamics which always seem to necessitate reform. It is striking that modern scholarship has overwhelmingly been interested in the convictions and intentions of Enlightenment thinkers rather than in their styles of argumentation and their techniques of implementation.<sup>18</sup> In the following paragraphs, Enlightenment historiography is presented, paying particular attention to the factual connection of reform and languages in the eighteenth century.

Research on the fundamental changes that occurred during the European Enlightenment has a long history, and its far-reaching reforms

continue to provoke fierce controversy. As in the eighteenth century, the struggle against religious fanaticism is still often invoked, nowadays especially against the social and political power of radical Islam and its followers. Twentieth-century studies on the Enlightenment are, to a large extent, rather inspired by oppositions to fascism and, in a more general sense, to totalitarianism. The defence of a positive concept of modernity that embraces elements like reason and rationality, human and civil rights, toleration, democracy, and constitutionalism has led to intensive studies of the forerunners of what was at stake in the intellectual and political battles of the twentieth century.

This was also the case of critiques of Enlightenment's instrumental and eventually totalitarian rationality that Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno verbalized in *Dialektik der Aufklärung* (1947, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*). However, this is also particularly important for opponents of fascism such as Ernst Cassirer, Paul Hazard, Franco Venturi and Peter Gay. While Cassirer's *Die Philosophie der Aufklärung* stresses the model of natural science for enlightened rationalism, Hazard's *La crise de la conscience européenne* (1935, *The Crisis of the European Conscience*) turns the *siecle des philosophes* in eighteenth-century France into a broad international movement whose beginnings are dated to the expulsion of the French Huguenots and their establishment as an international franco-phone community which took place in Northern Europe in the 1680s.<sup>19</sup>

As Hazard's student in Paris, the antifascist emigrant Venturi chose a unique approach to conceptualize the Enlightenment as a transnational movement of practical social, political, and economic reform. The Italian public sphere with its many *gazettes* and various correspondences became the beacon from where he presented the eighteenth century from Iberia to Russia as an age of reform. He was guided by an international movement of reformers that led to *The End of the Old Regime in Europe*, which was also the English title of the translated last three volumes of Venturi's bulky *Settecento riformatore* (1969–90). He opened up a new perspective on the relation between the ideas of a political enlightenment and their practical implementation in reform processes. Thereby, Venturi extended the notion of reform by including intentional changes from other, maybe lesser known actors, rather than government officials or enlightened despots. He thus uncovered new heroes of reform and indicated the importance of such engaged, creative individuals for the introduction of the desired modifications. Venturi's interpretation of the Enlightenment was *republican*, in the sense that it focused particularly on the activities of Enlightenment circles and on the tradition of free states. To recognise this distinct interest can help to understand characteristic shortcomings of his work, such as his discussion of Prussia: Venturi did not want to put emphasis on what since the mid-nineteenth century had been labeled *enlightened absolutism* or *enlightened despotism* – concepts that attribute importance to the monarchs' domestic policies for the modernization

of legal, fiscal, and economic systems, or for the improvement of education or social conditions, or to effectively control the church.<sup>20</sup>

Peter Gay's *The Enlightenment: An Interpretation* (1966–69) by contrast presents the *philosophes* as a coherent group characterized by modern paganism (or secularism), and their conceptual preparation of modernity through a scientific approach as a liberating movement towards individual emancipation.<sup>21</sup> This focus omits the *philosophes*' serious interest in religious issues in the *Deutsche Aufklärung* or the international character of the movement. Gay's selection makes the Enlightenment too French, too secular, too monolithic, too modern, and too positive when he suggests "that the Enlightenment is responsible for everything that is good about the twentieth century".<sup>22</sup>

The critical German tradition of the Frankfurt School paved the way for interpretations that concentrated on the temporal and structural implications of the Enlightenment, as evident in works by Reinhart Koselleck and Jürgen Habermas. Koselleck's *Kritik und Krise. Eine Studie zur Pathogenese der bürgerlichen Welt* (1954) was translated with significant changes to the title as *Critique and Crisis: Enlightenment and the Pathogenesis of Modern Society*. Actually, Koselleck had originally considered naming his work *Dialektik der Aufklärung* but abandoned that title after the publication of Horkheimer and Adorno's homonymous book. Koselleck interprets the Enlightenment realm of critique as a subversive overestimation of the capabilities of rational universalism that was responsible for the implosion of the Ancien Régime – a critical interpretation of the Enlightenment that has no match in the Anglophone world – in spite of Isaiah Berlin's *Three Critics of the Enlightenment* (2000). Jürgen Habermas' *Strukturwandel der Öffentlichkeit. Untersuchungen zu einer Kategorie der bürgerlichen Gesellschaft* (1961: *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*) offers a more positive view on social change during the eighteenth century in that he highlights its contribution to the emergence of a public sphere for rational discussion and interprets the latter as a precondition of modern democracy – not least in the everyday debates within and between learned societies.<sup>23</sup>

Koselleck not only went on to study the administrative implementation of reform in Prussia (*Preußen zwischen Reform und Revolution. Allgemeines Landrecht, Verwaltung und soziale Bewegung von 1791 bis 1848*), he also became the mastermind behind a huge collaborative project resulting in the well-known eight volumes of *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe* (1972–1997: *Basic Concepts in History: A Historical Dictionary of Political and Social Language in Germany*) that focused on the semantic changes of key concepts in the century between 1750 and 1850. The idea behind this periodization is to deliberately disregard the coherence of Enlightenment thought and instead to look at the correlations between semantic modifications and social-political revolutions, within which words such as *reform* became concepts of movement (*Bewegungsbegriffe*)

that were consonant with a characteristic shift from a society of orders to a society of citizens. The *Grundbegriffe* are mostly based on products of *high culture* but nevertheless inspired another project with a clear focus on France during the Enlightenment and integrating popular and visual culture. From 1985 onwards, Rolf Reichardt, Eberhard Schmitt and Hans Jürgen Lüsebrink have been editing a *Handbuch politisch-sozialer Grundbegriffe in Frankreich 1680–1820* (*Manual of Fundamental Political and Social Concepts in France*). This endeavour mirrors the research on the French Enlightenment that sought to explore a social history of ideas, focusing on the practices of reading and writing (Roger Chartier, *Lectures et lecteurs dans la France d'Ancien Régime*, 1987), of the publication and transmission of knowledge (Robert Darnton, *The Business of Enlightenment. A Publishing History of the Encyclopédie 1775–1800*, 1979) or on communication within translocal networks (Daniel Roche, *Le siècle des lumières en province*, 1978).<sup>24</sup>

To study political ideas as pragmatic speech acts in historical contexts has for some decades been the claim of what is labelled the *Cambridge School of Political Ideas*. After studying the republican tradition in Britain and North America in a diachronic perspective, John Pocock dedicated several volumes to Edward Gibbon and his ambivalence between the languages of ancient republican virtue and modern liberal commerce – a topic that has entailed many other monographs on the eighteenth-century Atlantic worlds. Together with Quentin Skinner, Pocock coined what he calls *political languages* (but also *discourses* or *paradigms*) which consist of particular “idioms, rhetorics, specialised vocabularies, and grammars”; most of them studied in their perspective towards modernity (sovereignty, natural rights, liberty), although in an early modern context.<sup>25</sup>

Discourse is also one of the more theoretically elaborated key concepts of Michel Foucault’s analytical toolkit. He developed his concepts not least by studying the rationalization processes of the Enlightenment, which he did not consider as part of a positive teleology towards modernity, but as a disciplinary tool for social control and standardization (*Surveiller et punir: Naissance de la prison = Discipline and Punish*, 1975). Foucault insisted on the normative force of discourses with respect to what can or cannot be said at a given historical moment. He was not the only scholar to remain sceptical about the emancipatory promises of the *philosophes*. Postmodern, postcolonial, feminist, and other authors have also stressed the shortcomings of practice and of theory during the Enlightenment, objecting to implicit and explicit omissions and exclusions that reveal prejudices against women or non-Europeans and that legitimized colonial expansion and Eurocentrism.<sup>26</sup>

Conversely, Jonathan Israel vindicates the Enlightenment by interpreting it as a movement that prepared society for modernity. Unlike his predecessors such as Gay, he does not have a monistic vision of the

Enlightenment and does not oppose the *philosophes* or the Counter-Enlightenment of e.g. religious orthodoxy. However, he opposes what he calls a radical Enlightenment based on models such as those suggested by Spinoza (1632–1677), Bayle (1647–1706), Diderot (1713–1784), and Holbach (1723–1789) to a moderate movement that did not renounce religion in favour of pure rationalism and whose exponents were, for instance, Locke (1632–1704), Voltaire (1694–1778), and Montesquieu (1689–1755). This distinction carves out opposing sets of propositions, focuses on the debates and controversies of the time, and thereby seeks to highlight the elements leading into modernity in premodern thought, i.e. to individual freedom, secularism, republicanism, democracy, the rejection of racial and gender discrimination, toleration, freedom of expression, agnosticism, universalism, and anti-colonialism. Israel's opposition between a *good* full-fledged, coherent, and radical Enlightenment and a problematic, half developed, incoherent, and moderate Enlightenment can be criticized, however, as being as ahistorical in its teleology as other interpretations which presuppose a monistic ideology embedded in Enlightenment thought.<sup>27</sup>

Against these dangers of *Geistesgeschichte* always present in Enlightenment historiography, another approach can be to read eighteenth-century texts in their pragmatic contexts as a means of promoting and implementing concrete reforms. Rejecting the traditional interpretation of the Enlightenment as a direct source for particular reform measures, some historians have argued that the Enlightenment provided a broad intellectual, ideological, and mental context in which contemporaries could aspire to new institutional, political, social, and cultural practices.<sup>28</sup> The actors involved in reform processes constitute another subject of discussion. While reforms were for a considerable time conceived as a primarily monarchical undertaking,<sup>29</sup> recent scholarship has increasingly diversified the objects of investigation. This development is displayed in a shift of terminology: the terms *enlightened absolutism* and *enlightened despotism* are recently subsumed under the more flexible category *enlightened reform*.<sup>30</sup> In the same vein, historians have steadily shifted the focus from certain monarchs and their administrators to other actors such as societies, religious protagonists, and outsiders.<sup>31</sup> Hence, eighteenth-century desires to reform were presented as results of complex interactions rather than as consequences of power exercised from above.

Attention has already been paid to reform and revolution as both historical and analytical concepts. Thus, several studies have examined the contemporary meanings and ambiguities of these terms.<sup>32</sup> In the same vein, reform as an object of investigation for historians has been elaborated on and broadened to include not only implemented policies but also aspirations to intentionally shape various aspects of society.<sup>33</sup> Over the last two decades, scholars have additionally broadened the geographical and chronological scope. They stressed that the concept of *reform* can be

applied to understand the wide-ranging changes that not only occurred in Europe but also well beyond. Similarly, the policy of intentional alterations of the seventeenth and the nineteenth centuries have been considered as constituting part of the *age of reform*.<sup>34</sup>

## Languages of Reform

While it is conceivable to study *languages of reform* in the nineteenth or any other century, the approach seems to be indispensable with regard to studying the eighteenth century, not least because it cuts to the core of the Enlightenment. When approximating *languages of reform* and the Enlightenment, we do not mean to impose a teleology as progress towards rationalism, secularism, or revolution. If anything, it is rather the point of departure: Enlightenment as an epoch-making quest for ways of turning the very corrosion of former certainties into a stepping stone to an imagined and improved future. What matters is less the content of particular demands for reform but rather the ways the very requests were introduced – not so much what is proclaimed but how this happened. Moreover, it is fruitful to pay special attention to the socio-political contexts, within which the related strategies of articulation are situated: the constitution of the concerned audience, the goals pursued by authors, the linguistic and rhetoric particularities of their formulations and the type of solutions they suggested.

Overall, historians have, for a long time, agreed on the importance of employing an international and comparative approach in order to understand the variety and local peculiarities of eighteenth-century reforms. Although some studies have recognized that many different individuals or groups have employed different *languages of reform*, research has not yet studied them any further. The toolkit presented here for grasping languages of reform is wide, even if this volume does not include linguistics in the narrow sense of the word. The goal is to bring together cases from different linguistic areas without establishing a coherent corpus of these languages. The volume aims to bring to light different linguistic mediations of reform(s) in varying social, political, or economic contexts of the European Enlightenment.

If we agree that “intellectual history . . . is the eclectic discipline par excellence”,<sup>35</sup> this must not be equated with an arbitrary *anything goes*. Rather the volume invites the authors to provide specific and adequate instruments for their particular analyses. There is no such thing as a particular or exclusive method for studying languages of reform. For this reason, this volume brings together research influenced by the different scholarly traditions which have renewed conventional history of ideas (*Geistesgeschichte*) within the last decades: Italian *Pensiero politico*, German *Begriffsgeschichte*, French *Histoire sociale de la culture*, British Ideas in Context, American Intellectual History. Most contributions

grew from Enlightenment-concerned historiographical case studies. It is not our intention to present one unified methodical approach as the one best way of understanding texts of the Enlightenment. On the contrary, it is our aim to draw from different historiographical traditions, which in some cases have been neglected in recent research on intellectual history. The case studies assembled here thus present eighteenth-century reform processes not as an intellectual world of shared convictions but as a social world of similar intellectual procedures and practices that all refer to the use of a rationalizing language in order to defend or argue for reform.

Furthermore, for such a broad perspective outlined here, it is helpful to define the Enlightenment not as a coherent set of philosophical and political propositions and intentions but as particular modes of collective reasoning and communicating about it, as media-related cultural practices of criticism, enquiry, and exchange with standardized key concepts, moral credos, and reference sources. It is less characterized by particular topics, let alone by undeniable assumptions, than by the structure of debates that guaranteed equal participation to all the interveners in spite of their affiliation to a specific social order. In that sense, it was proto-democratic. These debates followed certain rules, some of which were formal (such as statutes defining the sequence in debating), some informal. Languages of reform, as we treat them in this volume, belong to the latter.

In this book, *language* is used as a common denominator for studying the Enlightenment with a particular focus less on its contents and aims and more on its ways of transmission, its imposition, its disseminations, and its changes through such dissemination and communication processes. In a general sense, we problematize both the conceptual understanding of reform as it was put forward by the *philosophes* and their followers and the ways they discussed the implementations of reform. In analogy to the popular usage of *language*, our concept implies that there are different linguistic levels which, to some extent, imply coherent arguments, strategies, language games and concomitant vocabularies, assumptions, associations, and references. The concept is more flexible and less constraining than the precisely defined *ideas* and even the *political languages* in the Pocockian sense that imply a certain (ideo-)logical coherence typical e.g. of the discussion of natural rights. Languages as we define them can be distinguished in different vernaculars and in the eighteenth century as opposed to other epochs. They can be considered as linguistic phenomena shared within the transnational *respublica litteraria* of the Enlightenment and are distinct, for instance, from the languages of administration that were already discussed by contemporaries.<sup>36</sup> Languages enable us to seize commonalities in Enlightenment thought even where the particular convictions and intentions are manifold. In and with languages, individual and collective intentions were expressed. They also have a structuring effect and define the framework of what can and what

cannot be said in a specific realm, determining the valid ways of reasoning and arguing in a particular debate. Finally, they constitute the context for the kinds of reform that might be conceived, discussed, and affirmed. Instead of identifying the relation between *the Enlightenment movement* and reform, different languages may be revealed or interconnected, for example the one developed for the growing social sciences that can be distinguished from the juridical discourse of natural law and others. As to the languages of reform, they had the particularity that they defined, motivated, initiated, and legitimated fundamental changes in political, religious, economic, social, or cultural spheres. Unlike scholarly languages, languages of reform were oriented towards concrete practices, not towards an all-encompassing theory; they presented contemporary shortcomings rather than future perfection. Additionally, they often addressed a clearly defined audience and they did not need to be logically and absolutely consistent but rather politically effective. When it comes to the analysis of the linguistic substructure of reform processes, the actual outcomes and institutional effects of the latter are rather insignificant. However, studying the contemporary evaluation of those very processes is worthwhile. In fact, the sketched developments indicate that the implementation of reforms was increasingly subject to a critique that was based on the same argumentative foundations as their ideation. Reform arguments not only had to overcome conservative opposition but also were compelled to persist in an on-going competition of rivaling reform goals and approaches. Finally, the usefulness and success of reforms could be scrutinized empirically with reference to observable, yet contestable, results or achievements.

It is our goal to compare and relate an exemplary set of reform languages referring to many different subjects and emerging from diverse socio-geographic and ideological contexts of eighteenth-century Europe and to explore how they might have been interconnected. To study *languages of reform* means to engage with historical modes of discussion informed by the fundamental empirical and conceptual developments of the eighteenth century. The notion of an essentially static world order and the predominance of the *historia sacra* were increasingly challenged by biblical criticism or interaction with non-European cultures. Change in all its kinds was claimed by or attributed to mankind, and human agency also meant human responsibility for shortcomings in the past and future bettering. These prerequisites beg the question as to how actors called for reform during the eighteenth century. How did they put forward concrete measures and how did they propagate and legitimate processes of change before, during, and after they took place? As Gisela Schlüter's article explores in detail, over the course of the eighteenth century, the term *reform* (*reformatio*, *reformation*, *réforme*, *riforma*, etc.) itself appears to have undergone a change in meaning in many European languages from *return to an erstwhile (moral) purity* to *future oriented intentional*

*change.* These changes, however, did not occur exactly synchronously. Such developments also reflected in the other contexts studied in this book. The comparative analysis of this process as well as the mapping of the respective semantic fields is one of our goals because of its potential to shed light on the thematic as well as on national commonalities, differences, and interconnections of European languages of reform.

Extrapolating from preconceptions on the Enlightenment, one would assume that firstly languages of reform typically built on a new understanding of time, secondly took recourse to new means of legitimization, and thirdly conceived change as a process that can be steered. The reformist notion of time thus seems to presuppose an uncertain, or open, future (in the Koselleckian sense) that could be shaped by human actions taken in the present. The framing of time thus needed to be linear, not circular (as e.g. in a Polybian cycle) and while the Last Judgement was not necessarily denied, it was no longer the sole vanishing point defining the future and therefore ceased to be the decisive reference point for human action. Rather, amelioration in this world – sometimes abstractly conceptualized as progress – gained acceptance as a worthy goal to pursue. The presupposition of different possible futures, in turn, necessitated arguments for a specific state of the future that seemed to be desirable. Because the future was unknown, reform arguments employed accountable means of legitimization that were, to an increasing extent, based on reason: natural law and empirical and systematic scientific reasoning, for instance, or the orientation towards successful models, i.e. in foreign countries or history. In the case of a historical model, its legitimacy was no longer derived solely from precedence; it rather served as an empirical blueprint for the past that was open to analysis. Reformist argumentation not only juxtaposed an analysis of the present with a desirable future situation but also needed to present a plausible way of achieving the latter. Reform therefore directed the view towards the on-going process of change; the path that led to the desired result. To reach that path, strategies needed to be conceived and methods assessed in order to ascertain how exactly a desirable change could be brought about. Especially during the latter half of the eighteenth century, authors explicitly stressed their own role as leading participants in directed processes of change. As the case studies in this volume show, the authors increasingly widened the scope of issues and potentials opened up by and for reform. The languages analysed here do not necessarily apply the word *reform* or any of its equivalents. Still, one would expect the authors to use, at least implicitly, languages centred on the reformist idea, outlined in the preceding paragraph, that institutions or practices could and should be reshaped in order not only to correct aberrations but also to intentionally bring about conditions of a better future.

This raises the question which temporal points of reference authors of the eighteenth century actually used when they propagated concrete

reform measures. Were they situated in the past or the future? In fact, over large parts of the eighteenth century, the preference of innovation over precedent was far from self-evident. As Winfried Schulze has asserted, the wide-ranging transformations during the early modern period were widely perceived as threatening; even in the eighteenth century, methods and concepts allowing to perceive and welcome change were only gradually developed, let alone accepted.<sup>37</sup> In order to achieve results, reformers often had to overcome massive opposition of vested interest and strong arguments of custom and established or even sanctified usage – traditions that several of them tried to uphold, too, at least partly. Due to such conditions it was particularly important to propagate reform in a rather conservative way. Hence, reform languages also needed to appeal to their recipients and were thus shaped and influenced as much by those who employed them as by their audiences. Moreover, the structural change of public spheres meant that the intended audience of reform arguments widened beyond the scale of local communication that can be traced back to a physically defined face-to-face dimension. This can be seen in the growth and spreading of learned societies that most often started as urban enterprises and developed regional, national, and international scopes during the eighteenth century. New and far-reaching means of communication such as journals and newspapers helped to weave local experience with global knowledge and universal arguments as well as facilitating contact to be made with an anonymous readership.

The languages of reform considered in this volume hardly emerged as radically new semantic patterns. In this sense, they do not match with Andreas Bahrer and Dietmar Schiersner's definition of reform as a fundamental refashioning of a society's system of action and language that occurs when the conventional scope of actions and semantic patterns no longer accommodate the needs of a pertinent group.<sup>38</sup> While the ex-post view may suggest such groundbreaking societal changes, the assumption that reform implies the unequivocal, agonistic struggle between progressive and conservative groups (and their languages) misconstrues the processes in which these very changes occurred. Languages of reform often provoked and followed new logics that were not necessarily identical to the initial intentions behind specific reform measures. A comparative study of languages of reform thus also sheds light on how intentions, plans, or strategies were reshaped and changed by the reform process itself.

For large parts of the eighteenth century, reform-oriented language appears ostensibly conventional. As Quentin Skinner noted in 1989, new meanings are rather created by a shift or a widening of the frames of reference of existing terms rather than as a consequence of a successful argument. In a generally pragmatic, goal-oriented process of debates and actions, semantic patterns including new connotations and normative references were offered. Dependent on wider developments, they were taken up and accepted to, in turn, become conventional – or they were

not.<sup>39</sup> This somewhat clandestine or implicit character of languages of reform may mark a key difference to revolutionary language that more openly endorses the novelty of change.

## Structure of the Book

Languages of reform consist of speech acts that identify the need for change in a specific field of human agency. Thus, these speech acts serve to legitimate reform as an endeavour to consciously shape the future. As languages of reform can engage with an infinite variety of subjects, we decided to approach eighteenth-century reforms from different methodological angles which pay particular attention to the common elements of these languages and to their development over time. We have centred the chapters of this volume on five thematic focal points which we consider to be particularly pertinent for the historical analysis of languages of reform. These five points are I. Semantics of Languages of Reform; II. Strategies and Rhetoric of Reform; III. Thematic Vocabularies in Specific Contexts; IV. Adaption and Translation of Reform Languages; and V. Reflecting on Reform.

As a starting point for studying languages of reform, we have chosen to analyse their semantics. Section I of this book will therefore embark upon reform discourses from a linguistic perspective. Moreover, it will also deal with shifts in the arguments, authorities, and pragmatics of languages of reform. Gisela Schlüter, for example, focuses on the semantic shifts of the notion of reform in different European languages throughout the eighteenth century, while Sebastian Meurer deals with epistemic and semantic developments in the context of British reform debates in the long eighteenth century, from the *Glorious Revolution* to the struggles preceding the *Great Reform Act*. Manuela Albertone revolves around the mechanisms of the emergence of the federalist idea in political debates during the eighteenth century from the Old Regime to the Revolution in France. In their joint chapter Lisa Kolb and Lothar Schilling analyze three frequently used terms, ‘reform’, ‘revolution’, and ‘Aufnahme’, in context of a general idea of economic improvement in the Republic of Berne arguing that the terms’ semantic ambiguity established discursive frameworks and future-oriented ideas of change. Besides investigating historical vocabularies and the usage of functional languages in French, German, English, and Italian, the inherent logics of political languages are explored, in this first section, from diverse viewpoints. These joint analyses allow us to highlight trends of semantic change that are crucial to the understanding of the miscellaneous historical languages of reform.

Section II of this book explores the various strategies put into service by eighteenth-century authors to argue in favour of intentional and controlled changes. Therefore, it spotlights eighteenth-century authors’ intentions and their techniques of persuasion. These were shaped by

three major factors: the targeted audience, the authors' diverse backgrounds and their perception of the contemporary socio-political situation. In order to produce credibility, authors utilized a variety of techniques related to image cultivation. This self-fashioning as reformers created legitimacy and sometimes amounted to tendencies of professionalization of the reformer. The ensemble of these factors might be completed with the various contexts in which authors wrote (linguistic, textual, biographical, socio-economic, institutional, and cultural). The probable readers who were considered to have the power to bring about change were often the implicit or explicit addressees of reform proposals. Thus, the target audience indirectly affected the specific rhetoric as well as the arguments employed to impose the language of reform on readers. Accordingly, Susan Richter analyses the strategies of persuasion employed within the German discourse on Cameralism, while Gregor Stiebert examines its practical side analysing administrative reforms in the Habsburg monarchy under Maria Theresia which established a more systematic way of government. Instead of describing them as "reform" measures to bring up the modern state, the chapter shows that these measures were perceived as rational steps to improve or re-arrange the administration for maintaining the state as a rule-bound system. Thus, reform is connected with the aim to achieve usefulness. The same applies to the chapters of Cecilia Carnino and Johan Lange who take a closer look at discourses about and luxury in France and university reforms in the German territories in the second half of the eighteenth century.

Rhetorical and argumentative patterns as well as their vocabulary were not stable by far in the eighteenth century but changed in relation to shifting political and social contexts. Therefore, the chapters of Section III seek to identify change in a variety of areas and on multiple levels, ranging from vocabulary, narratives, assumptions, implications, and structural circumstances to arguments for concrete necessities and policies. However, the explanation of alterations in languages of reform must not be reduced to a simple reflection of shifting socio-political circumstances. Rather, the chapters of this section demonstrate how languages and contexts continuously moulded each other by interacting in complex and at times surprising ways. They examine precisely what was subject to change: public controversies, an argumentative pattern, or individual terms and their meanings within a larger political language. For example, Lina Weber studies the way in which the Dutch economic patriots prepared the argumentative ground for the rhetoric of political patriotism. Johannes Süßmann deals with century-long debates across several countries over the political applications of natural law, while Theo Jung examines linguistic reforms in Germany. He juxtaposes the clear and precise language of political criticism to a language appealing to the spirit of a people. Christine Zabel analyses economic language in context of speculation and the trade-off between profit and risk, and the virtues

of a good merchant in a free market in Mid-eighteenth-Century France. Avi Lifschitz examines the discussions revolving around the improvement of the civic status of Jewish subjects in late eighteenth-century Prussia. Therefore, the chapters of this section also beg the question at which point one can speak of a new political language or of an adaptation of an existing language.

The purpose of Section IV is to illustrate the different ways languages of reform were adapted, translated, and contested. In this context, translation means not only translation from one vernacular to another but also the transmission of concepts or ideas into other cultural contexts and the creative adaption of the aforementioned to make them employable for specific discourses. In the framework of languages of reform, translation often aimed at presenting foreign models and explaining how these models could be adapted for one's own purposes. Translation thus was an important aspect of the strategies brought into play in order to legitimize both reform and its corresponding languages. The reforms discussed in this section often reacted to perceived challenges of the state systems: wars, foreign affairs, the predominance of a small number of monarchical powers, and the threat of increasing competition with other states. Both Isabelle Deflers and Pascal Firges deal with reform discourses that emerged in the milieu of military defeat. In this situation, those who felt threatened looked for models of success: historical exempla, foreign states, or models derived from systematic thought. Innovation and following foreign models remained highly controversial in the eighteenth century.

The last set of chapters of this volume revolve around the question of self-reflexivity within reform discourses. The contributions to Section V enquire how commentators from the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries reflected upon the relationship between reform and revolution. Some eighteenth-century critics warned about the potentially despotic effects of government-driven institutional reforms based on a top-down model, as they considered *moderation* to be the necessary principle of reform. Others, in turn, sought to radicalize languages of reform in order to evoke a revolutionary change in political culture, as can be seen in Wyger Velema's chapter on the changing language of reform within the context of the Dutch Revolution. This line in the sand between the languages of radical reform and revolution could sometimes be very blurred. In the nineteenth century, this led to controversies over the right interpretation of eighteenth-century enlightened reforms which were tied to short-term political debates, as shown by Béla Kapossy's contribution on post-revolutionary German and Swiss controversies between liberals and conservatives. They still challenge our contemporary notions of a strict separation between our own conceptions of reform and revolution. At the same time, they reflect upon the persistence of the conservative language of reform that was so typical for the Enlightenment and which

often tried to avoid the suspicion of *innovation*, a term that kept a negative connotation for some time.

## Notes

1. J.G. von Herder, *Seele und Gott* (Stuttgart: Cotta, 1828), 266.
2. D. Oschmann, *Bewegliche Dichtung: Sprachtheorie und Poetik bei Lessing, Schiller und Kleist* (München: Wilhelm Fink, 2007), 8; On language in general, A. Langen, “Der Wortschatz des 18. Jahrhunderts,” in *Deutsche Wortgeschichte*, ed. F. Maurer and H. Rupp, 3rd ed. (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1974), 2: 31–195.
3. B. Loewenstein, *Der Fortschrittsglaube: Geschichte einer europäischen Idee* (Göttingen: V&R UniPress, 2009); On the metaphor of paths in the context of progress cf. D. Bachmann-Medick, “Fort-Schritte, Gedanken-Gänge, Ab-Stürze: Bewegungshorizonte und Subjektverortung in literarischen Beispielen”, in *Raum und Bewegung in der Literatur: Die Literaturwissenschaften und der Spatial Turn*, Lettre, ed. W. Hallet and B. Neumann (Bielefeld: transcript, 2009), 257–279.
4. H. Blumenberg and C. Schmitt, *Briefwechsel 1971–1978 und weitere Materialien* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2007), 25–26.
5. R. Koselleck, *Vergangene Zukunft: zur Semantik geschichtlicher Zeiten* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1979), 328.
6. P.-A. Alt, *Begriffsbilder: Studien zur literarischen Allegorie zwischen Opitz und Schiller*, Studien zur deutschen Literatur 131 (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1995), 603.
7. M.A. Lucanus, *Civil War*, trans. B. Walters (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett, 2015), 139.
8. The etymology of the term “sibyl” is still unclear today. One explanation goes back to the generic term *Boulla*, the Council of the Gods. A Council of the Gods concerned the future of one person or the people and was proclaimed by a sibyl. The sibyl is a woman who sees the future through the gods and predicts the future, whose oracles have influenced, guided or legitimized political decisions in Greece, Persia, the Asia Minor and North African Mediterranean region and Rome since antiquity or have supported argumentation in political disputes. See J.-D. Gauger, trans., *Sibyllinische Weissagungen* (Düsseldorf: Artemis & Winkler, 1998), 335–348, esp. 346f.
9. The Roman emperors had emphasized their task of establishing fair rule through universal reform to create universal peace. After the abdication of Emperor Charles V and the decay of the *Universitas Christiana* through the Reformation, England had taken up this imperial claim. As a means of legitimization, it had played an important role ever since the reign of Queen Elizabeth I justifying the dual role of the English Queen as both a worldly ruler and the head of the Anglican Church. See K. Koch, “Europa, Rom und der Kaiser vor dem Hintergrund von zwei Jahrtausenden Rezeption des Buches Daniel”, in *Berichte der Sitzungen der Joachim Jungius Gesellschaft der Wissenschaften e.V.*, Vol. 15, no. 1 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1997); F.A. Yates, *Astraea: The Imperial Theme in the Sixteenth Century* (London: Routledge, 1975).
10. The characteristic attribute of the pictorially fixed sibyls was the raised index finger as a gesture of proclamation, which symbolically corresponds to the “Ecce” with which many of their prophecies begin. A banner or plaque almost always refers to the prophecy. The index finger here is replaced by the pruning knife and the banner in this case is the book (Lucan). E. Wind,

- “Michelangelo’s Prophets and Sibyls”, *Proceedings of the British Academy* 51 (1965): 47–83.
11. J.G. Hertel, ed., *Des berühmten italiänischen Ritters, Caesaris Ripae, allerley Künsten und Wissenschaften dienlicher Sinnbilder und Gedancken* (Augsburg, 1758), V:97; for further details on Wachsmuth see H. Vollmer, ed., *Allgemeines Lexikon der bildenden Künstler von der Antike bis zur Gegenwart*, Vol. 35 (Leipzig: Seemann, 1942; repr., 1999): 5.
  12. On pruning as a professional and scientized activity in the late eighteenth century, see, for instance, T. Mawe and J. Abercrombie, “Pruning”, *The Universal Gardener and Botanist* (1778): 767–775, esp. 774.
  13. C. Ripa, *Iconologia* (Rome, 1593; repr. Venice, 1645), 530.
  14. The religious dimension of Wachsmuth’s understanding of *Reformation* which is based on the allusion to Josiah, is unique to its time. George Richardson, for instance, supplies his allegory of Reformation like Ripa, merely with the billhook and Lucan’s *Civil War*, see G. Richardson, *Iconology: Or, a Collection or Emblematical Figures, Moral and Instructive* (London, 1779), 2:139, Fig. 590.
  15. Diderot to Sophie Volland, 26 September 1762: “Cet ouvrage produira sûrement avec le temps une révolution dans les esprits, et j’espère que les tyrans, les oppresseurs, les fanatiques et les intolérants n’y gagneront pas. Nous aurons servi l’humanité.”
  16. D. Brewer, “The Enlightenment Today?” in *Cambridge Companion to French Enlightenment*, ed. D. Brewer (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 1–2.
  17. Brewer, “The Enlightenment Today?” 1–4.
  18. One important exception is, for example, Dan Edelstein’s analysis of the Enlightenment narrative. See D. Edelstein, *The Enlightenment: A Genealogy* (Chicago, IL: University Press of Chicago, 2010).
  19. M. Horkheimer and T. Adorno, *Dialektik der Aufklärung: philosophische Fragmente* (Amsterdam: Querido, 1947); E. Cassirer, *Die Philosophie der Aufklärung* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1932); P. Hazard and J.L. May, *The Crisis of the European Mind 1680–1715* (1935; repr., New York, NY: Fordham University Press, 1990).
  20. F. Venturi, *The End of the Old Regime in Europe: 1776–1789*, 3 vols. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1991); F. Venturi, *Settecento riformatore*, 7 vols. (Torino: Einaudi, 1969–1990); F. Venturi, *Utopia and Reform in the Enlightenment* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971).
  21. P. Gay, *The Enlightenment: An Interpretation*, 2 vols. (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1967–1970).
  22. P. Gay, *The Bridge of Criticism: Dialogues Among Lucian, Erasmus, and Voltaire in the Enlightenment* (New York, NY: Harper & Row, 1970), 125–126.
  23. R. Koselleck, *Kritik und Krise: Eine Studie zur Pathogenese der bürgerlichen Welt* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1973); R. Koselleck, *Critique and Crisis Enlightenment and the Pathogenesis of Modern Society* (Cambridge, MA: Massachusetts Institute of Technology Press, 2015); Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialektik*; I. Berlin, *Three Critics of the Enlightenment* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000); J. Habermans, *Strukturwandel der Öffentlichkeit: Untersuchung zu einer Kategorie der bürgerlichen Gesellschaft* (1961; repr., Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2006).
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## Section I

# Semantics of Languages of Reform



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# 1 The Concept of *Reform* in Polyglot European Enlightenment

*Gisela Schlüter*

“*Riforma, e poi riforma, e riforma grande.*”  
“Reform and then reform, big reform.”

—Lodovico Antonio Muratori<sup>1</sup>

## I. Investigating the Language of Historical Reform Discourse

The research project on languages of reform in the eighteenth century is equally situated in the domain of historical studies, i.e. history of events and structures, and in the domain of the history of discourse and argumentation, respectively. The following contribution, however, deals with the historical semantics of the concept of *reform* in the eighteenth century and is primarily conceived as a comparative analysis of its usages in different national languages. It thus complies with one of the desiderata of the research initiative and, at the same time, responds to the necessity already confirmed by Eckhard Hellmuth in 1999 to learn more “about the vocabulary that the advocates (and opponents) of change in Germany and Britain used in their language games”.<sup>2</sup> The existing accounts that focus on the history of the reform movement will be supplemented here by dealing with the history of the lexical field and concept of *reform*. The subsequent etymological and conceptual considerations can only indirectly shed light on political history. Due to the basic assumptions inherent to any approach in terms of conceptual history, a notion, and in this case the notion of *reform*, is not only an indicator but also an influential variable of political history: “Conceptual change is . . . itself a species of political innovation.”<sup>3</sup>

Both the concept of *reform*, situated in the lexical field of *reform/reformation/to reform*, and its synonyms have rather been pervasively used in the political discourse of the eighteenth century. However, even in the late eighteenth century, it still retained numerous non-political, traditional meanings. As a political term referring to the classification of concept types undertaken by Koselleck, it belongs to the *basic concepts* (*Grundbegriffe*) and terms denoting and influencing (social and intellectual)

movements (*Bewegungsbegriffe*)<sup>4</sup> of the so-called *saddle period*.<sup>5</sup> A volume recently published by Ernst Müller and Falko Schmieder is very helpful to re-contextualise politico-historical semantics *à la* Koselleck, containing a concise reconstruction of the history of historical semantics as a whole, as well as a compendium of its multidisciplinary manifestations and encyclopaedical instruments, with a particular focus on Koselleck and *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe*.<sup>6</sup>

In the following, I will demonstrate that the history of the concepts/words E. *Reform*/F. *Réforme*/G. *Reform*/It. *Riforma*/Sp. *reforma* seems to have largely paralleled the history of the often synonymously used concepts/words such as *reformation* and *revolution*. This is true at least as far as the main European languages considered here – French, English, German, Italian, and Spanish – are studied with a particular focus on a period ranging roughly from 1700 to the French Revolution in 1789. Thus, it is my goal to outline the polysemy of *reform\** in these languages and to indicate how *reform\** turned into a mainly political notion in the second half of the eighteenth century. Furthermore, commonalities among and differences between the structures of the word family *reform\** in the respective national languages will be emphasised. The semasiological perspective adopted here will inform the following historical sketch of the terms *reform\*/reformation*. The onomasiological dimension will also be considered – even if only peripherally. This will especially be the case when the synonyms of *reform*, *improvement*, *innovation*, *revolution*, G. *Verbeserung*, F. *amélioration* etc. will be placed under the microscope.

Being explicitly written from a comparative point of view, a history of the concept *reform\** seems to be a rather innovative approach, although there exist several well-documented accounts which deal with the conceptual history of *reform* in English,<sup>7</sup> French,<sup>8</sup> German,<sup>9</sup> and Italian to some extent.<sup>10</sup> Despite being based on them, this chapter had to add some basic information for the sake of its argument, at least as far as lexical aspects in Spanish and Italian are concerned. The necessity to complete the existing accounts on the etymology and history of the concept of *reform\** for the Romance languages has become evident in recent historical scholarship, which has started to pay particular attention to the *enlightened reforms* in the Romance countries. Gabriel Paquette has published two invaluable volumes on parts of the Enlightenment European reform movement that had so far attracted rather little attention, namely the reform movements in Italy, Spain, and the other Romance-speaking countries and Latin America.<sup>11</sup> Yet, it is rather evident that Romance research on the etymology and history of the concept in question can hardly benefit from the insights gained in these historical studies, since the source texts are almost exclusively given in an English translation. Even Franco Venturi's fundamental works on the *Settecento riformatore*, the starting point for any research on *enlightened reform* as a new paradigm of Enlightenment historiography, are for various reasons of

a somewhat limited value for reconstructing the history of the word/concept *reform\*/riforma*; the relative vagueness of Venturi's concept of *reform*<sup>12</sup> has been criticised, and Venturi was not particularly interested in the concrete occurrences of the word.

On the basis of several works on the history of the concept of *reform\** in English, French, German, and Italian, and by incorporating results from Italian and Spanish historiographic lexicography, a comparative sketch of the historic semantics of the concept of *reform* in the European Enlightenment discourse will be provided and the historical roots of the term will be investigated. The comparative perspective adopted here is somewhat problematic for several quite obvious reasons: Koselleck has already expressed doubts concerning the achievability of a valuable method of comparative historical semantics, although comparative historical semantics seemed indispensable to him.<sup>13</sup> Evident problems in dealing with conceptual history from a comparative perspective, however, have not restrained research activities.<sup>14</sup> Research on conceptual history is a rather pragmatic job and has defied most of the methodological obstacles. Jan-Werner Müller, in his concise report on the current state of the art, concludes that “pragmatism . . . helped *Begriffsgeschichte* travel”.<sup>15</sup>

However, defining the scope of the following reconstruction entails a series of further restrictions and advises caution: Important countries involved in the European reform movements of the eighteenth century such as Portugal, Denmark, and the Netherlands, as well as the respective national languages, have to be excluded here. The historical reconstruction has to make use of mainly secondary and tertiary resources (lexicography, research literature). The corpus of primary resources (primarily French) which were consulted is focused on political-programmatic and encyclopaedic-lexicographic texts written in the second half of the eighteenth century, the period in which *enlightened reforms* reached their peak. The socio-historical surplus value of the history of the concept postulated by Koselleck is impossible to reach. It is not possible to give information on social or regional variations in the usages of the words. Furthermore, the comparative approach does not enable us to establish a reliable chronology of the development of the notion in the different languages in the eighteenth century and up to the French Revolution.

After a brief survey of the general conceptual history of *reform*, a draft of the roots of the term will be followed by a brief elucidation of its development profile and its characteristics in the eighteenth century (parts II–III). Thereafter, I will deliver a short report on the various usages of *reform\** and the lexical options competing with *reform\** (parts IV–VI) and spotlight the usages in each of the mentioned national languages with their specific contexts and historical settings by adopting a comparative perspective (part VII). Subsequently, I intend to consider priorities, (inter)dependencies, similarities, and differences in the respective

languages. Huge databases such as ARTFL facilitate the access to the sources. In this context, I will mainly concentrate on the history of the French lexical pattern. In a further step (part VIII), two relatively homogenous and well-defined corpora particularly instructive for a comparative conceptual history of *reform* will be proposed in order to launch a more thorough research – a goal that, of course, cannot be achieved with this sketch. These multilingual corpora are thematically homogenous (reform of Italy; reform of the status of the Jews) and of great value for a comparative research as they allow us to confront languages and vocabularies directly; they are instructive for historical translation studies,<sup>16</sup> which have been productive for quite some time now (here: translations of reformist texts in other languages).

## II. *Reformatio*

Since the very beginning, there has been a strong normative component in the development of the meaning of *reform\**, the impact of which lasted until the end of the eighteenth century, despite the word's intentional and extensional meaning changing significantly in the course of history. The term *reform* was of extraordinary importance in the normative vocabulary of the Age of Enlightenment. This is the reason why, at the end of the Enlightenment period and close to the French Revolution, polemical usages of the reform vocabulary became rather frequent.

The history of *reform\** and its meanings in antiquity, which set out with the verb *reformare* to which its nominalised counterparts *reformatio* and *reformator* quickly have been added, have been sketched out by Eike Wolgast in his contribution to *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe*<sup>17</sup> and closely examined by Gerhart B. Ladner elaborating on the Christian-patristic meaning of Lt. *reformare/reformatio*.<sup>18</sup> Since the beginning, the meaning of *reform\** oscillates between (neutral) *transformation*, (normative) *restitutio*, and (normative) *reformatio in melius*. The semantic ambiguity of (neutral) material restructuring, (re)establishment, (normative) reparation of a functioning order, and (strongly normative) improvement<sup>19</sup> is still reflected in the duplicity of the (usually neutral) verb *reformer* and the (usually normative) verb *F. réformer* (retrospective/prospective) in French; these particular aspects will be reconsidered later. For the semantic differentiation process of *reformare* and *reformatio*, however, the double meaning of (normative and retrospective) *reformatio* as *restitutio*<sup>20</sup> and (normative and prospective) *reformatio in melius* was decisive. The formation of the polysemous notion *reform\** was adopted in the moral and political areas in the first century A.D. and later transferred into religious contexts.

The *reformatio morum* postulated by Seneca was to influence the history of the concept of *reform\** until well into the eighteenth century, reappearing in the syntagma *reformation of manners* and *réforme des*

*mœurs* with reference to both the collective and the individual (see section VI – *se réformer*). The moral-pedagogical meaning of *reform\** has to be considered a crucial factor in conceptual history; it will combine with the religious and political connotations of *reform\** and later on with the Enlightenment philosophy of history:

Ausgangspunkt ist der Gedanke des Verfalls und des abwärts führenden progressus; daraus ergibt sich die Notwendigkeit und Wünschbarkeit einer Veränderung des gegenwärtigen Zustands durch Rückkehr und Rückführung zu den vergangenen besseren Zeiten als Wertnorm. Mit diesem Verständnis ist der begriffliche Inhalt von ‘*reformatio*’ bereits auf Dauer festgelegt: die Verfallenheit als Voraussetzung und die Besserung durch Orientierung an den Maßstäben der Vergangenheit.<sup>21</sup>

Here, the historical roots of the double meaning of the Early Modern and Enlightenment notion of *reform/reformation* become visible. The term has been used, on the one hand, in the sense of (moral, religious, political) *restitutio*, i.e. return to a good original order – from now on for the sake of simplicity referred to as a retrospective, past-oriented *restorative notion*. On the other hand, it was employed in the sense of (moral, religious, political) *reformatio in melius* – from now on referred to as a prospective, future-oriented *melioristic notion*. Signs of decay and abuse should be erased by either re-establishing an intact original order or by making things better and preparing a perfect future. The conceptual history of the term oscillates between these two shades of meaning and, thus, shares the ambivalences of a regressive-progressive philosophy of history. These ambivalences are inscribed in the early history of the word, i.e. during the patristic period. Here, *reformatio* and *renovatio* designate the renewal of the faith of the religious believer – his way to salvation. Tertullian uses *reformatio* not only to designate the return to the state of creation, but also in its future-oriented meaning of *reformatio in melius*. Augustinus, in turn, causes a shift in its meaning: “the transformation of mankind by Christ”, according to Augustinus, is “not a *renovatio in pristinum*, but a *renovatio in melius*”.<sup>22</sup> The later historico-philosophical and melioristic perspective on *reform\** is based on the salvation-oriented meaning of such a *renovatio* (in the sense of the New Testament)/*reformatio*.

The ancient and patristic conceptualisation of the notion has left unmistakeable traces in the historical semantics of *Reform*.<sup>23</sup> This is not only true for the abstract and normative content of the concept, but also for another semantic strand that runs across the entire history of the concept. In the Middle Ages and the Early Modern times, particularly in Italy, this meaning has been evident and has led to the frequent usage of *reform\** as a technical term: “Ulpian und andere Rechtsgelehrte der

antoninisch-severischen Epoche übernehmen ‘reformatio’, ‘reformare’ in die juristische Terminologie.”<sup>24</sup> *Reform\** has traditionally served as a technical term appearing in concrete legal and administrative contexts. This aspect of the traditional semantics of *reform* is evidently most relevant for the notion of *reform* in the Age of Enlightenment, i.e. *reform\** as a designation for concrete legal procedures and administrative measures.<sup>25</sup> Joint efforts to launch reforms in many domains, i.e. politics, administration, justice, taxation, economy – reforms within an existing system – gave rise to the conception of comprehensive reform programmes in the eighteenth century.<sup>26</sup>

If one tried to name a single theorist of the late eighteenth century whose conceptualisation of reform comprises almost all the meanings of *reform\** pointed out previously, one would surely single out Condorcet: He had a decidedly melioristic notion of *reform* that placed a vehement emphasis on the *progrès indéfini*, and his political notion of *reform* had strong moral as well as pedagogic implications. Reform was propagated by Condorcet as a political type of action, a political style, and the conception of reform programmes and concrete reform measures were encompassed in his thinking.<sup>27</sup>

### **III. *Reform* and *Reformation***

How did the religious content of the notion of *reformation*, so prominent in the early stages of the notion’s development and also implied frequently in the word *reform*, survive in the Early Modern period? How did *reformation* [= *reform*] in the sense of a historically achieved reform (of the Christian church by Luther and Calvin) present itself against the background lined out previously?

Up into the eighteenth century, F. *réformation* and F. *réforme* have been used synonymously. G. *Reform*, E. *reform* were to be borrowed from French only in the eighteenth century; we will come back to this point. Until the eighteenth century, *reformation* remained the most common term for all concepts hitherto designated as *reform*. The concept of *reformation* referred to various things up into the eighteenth century. For instance, already in the sixteenth century *réformation* in French touched on legal issues.<sup>28</sup> Evidently, it was also used to designate the protestant *Reformation*, and, like *réforme*, it quite often also traditionally designated monastic reforms. As far as the notion of protestant Reformation is concerned, “Luther himself has used the term ‘reformation’ . . . relatively seldom.”<sup>29</sup> Which of those aforementioned semantic filiations going back to ancient and patristic traditions has actually coined the protestant notion of *reformatio* as *renovatio*, *regressus*, *progressus*, *reformatio morum* etc. is a question that cannot be discussed here. At any rate, *Reformation* had turned into a confessional term by the sixteenth century. In France, the polemic expression “la Religion prétendue réformée”

(R.P.R.), an expression evidently quite revealing in the conceptual history of reform, gained currency since the Edict of Beaulieu of 1576.<sup>30</sup>

In English, *reformation* became the designation of an epoch in the middle of the seventeenth century.<sup>31</sup> E. *Reformation*/F. *Réformation*/G. *Reformation* (often with capital letters) are, in this sense, still used as a designation of the epoch – together with E. *Reform*/F. *Réforme*/G. *Reform* in this sense. This particular notion of *Reformation* in terms of history, and ecclesiastical history in particular, underwent several changes during the Age of Enlightenment: On the one hand, *Reformation* as a labelling of an epoch turned into a term designating an ethos of permanent moral and spiritual renewal (comparable to the later development of the term *Enlightenment, les Lumières*): *Reformation*, i.e. the reformation of church and faith, became a historical mandate rooted in a characteristic philosophy of history based on a secularised Christianity.<sup>32</sup> Thus, *Reformation* presented itself, on the one hand, as a desirable and permanent reformation process concerning religion, church, and morals. On the other hand, the historical caesura brought about by the protestant Reformation, from the point of view of Enlightenment history, marked an important step within the history of progress, as important as the Italian Renaissance, for instance, or the installing of the printing press in Europe. During the Age of Enlightenment, which conceives its own genealogy in normative categories, the historical Reformation plays a crucial role in the history of the emancipation of humankind.<sup>33</sup>

In French, the enduring synonymy of *réforme* and *réformation* led to a differentiation of meaning which took place in the eighteenth century. The English and German equivalents derived from the French word F. *réforme* (E. *reform*; G. *Reform* – not current in the eighteenth century),<sup>34</sup> so that a more differentiated use of the terms became possible in these languages – but was by far not consistently practiced. On the contrary, in Italian the word It. *riforma* was almost exclusively used and It. *riformazione* (*riformagine*) was extremely rare. *Riforma* covers the entire range of meanings, including the religious, church-historical, and historical ones, of all that was traditionally designated as *reformation/Reformation* in the other languages. It. *Riforma*'s wide range of meanings explains why the semantic differentiation of *reform* – in contrast to *reformation/Reformation* (in the narrow sense) – is not achieved. This semantic conservatism is reflected in the title of Pilati's work (*Di una riforma d'Italia*), which will be discussed briefly in section VIII: Here, It. *riforma* allows a broader political but also narrower church historical reading, especially since the text makes references to both the religious and the political domains.<sup>35</sup> In contrast to the Italian language, the gradual disambiguation of *reformation* in English, German, and French and the fixation of *reform* in the eighteenth century were of considerable importance for the historical semantics of *reform* and *reformation* in these languages.

#### IV. Reform and Revolution

As parts of one word family, there has been a long competition between the words *reformation* and *reform*. For a long time, the words *reform* and *revolution* had also partially been used synonymously, especially in French. This holds true, however, only for the time up to the French Revolution. In its aftermath, the two words were diametrically opposed to each other, i.e. reform and revolution were considered as two competing types of political action aiming at change and progress. The notion of *reformism* was established in line with this distinction between reform and revolution in the nineteenth century in order to characterise the reformist type of political action. The concept of *reformism* was anticipated by the syntagma F. *esprit de réforme/de réformation*, E. *spirit of reformation*,<sup>36</sup> both documented in the discourse of the eighteenth century. It has lexical predecessors in English and Italian reaching back in time to the period of the Ancien Régime and the French Reformation.<sup>37</sup> The concept of *reformism* is evidence for the dynamisation of the notion of *reform* in the eighteenth century: *reform* as a dynamical and permanent corrective of itself.

For the present lexical research, the frequent synonymy of E. *Reform*/F. *réforme* and E. *Revolution*/F. *révolution* before the French Revolution is quite revealing.<sup>38</sup> The history of the words G. *Revolution*/E. *Revolution*/F. *révolution* has been subject to thorough research and does not have to be discussed here.<sup>39</sup> As far as language use in the eighteenth century is concerned, it can be stated that the word *revolution*, still without a capital letter, had a large extensional meaning, referred to completely different domains, and was comprised in many syntagmas (*révolution[s] dans les mœurs, dans les sciences, dans les arts, dans l'agriculture, dans la nature, heureuse révolution* and so on). It was used quite often in the plural,<sup>40</sup> maybe even more often than the word E. *reform(s)*/F. *réforme(s)* – in contrast to the later rather frequent singular of *Revolution* and plural of *reforms*. It is particularly interesting to see that the protestant *Reformation* is sometimes called a *revolution* during the eighteenth century (*révolution dans l'église*), a *revolution* in the sense of a sudden change with enduring consequences.<sup>41</sup> In general, the connotation of a crucial, abrupt, and irreversible upheaval is, however, not part of the notion of *revolution* in the eighteenth century. Instead, it still has something in common with its original cosmological meaning. Revolutions appear to be something nature-like and cyclical, slow, gradual, and driven by itself.<sup>42</sup> In contrast to this model of nature-like evolution implied in the traditional notion of *revolution*, the use of the notion of *reform* is linked to an active subject launching reforms (in the military, in church, in the legal branch, in administration, in economy, and in politics). According to Jaucourt, reformers should act in conformity with the manner in which *revolutions* (in the sense of changes) take place in nature: “Les révolutions que le

temps amène dans le cours de la nature, arrivent pas à pas; il faut donc imiter cette lenteur pour les innovations utiles qu'on peut introduire dans l'État.”<sup>43</sup> The two words sometimes occurred together in one syntagma. They were often related to particular contexts so that you may find [*des*] *révolutions dans . . .* and [*des*] *réformes de/dans . . .* in the sources. In words, *revolution/Revolution* or *reform/Reform* in an absolute meaning, i.e. designating the principles of revolution and reform, appear relatively seldom. The convergences and interferences between the concepts in their eighteenth century multifaceted manifestations cannot be disentangled, at least not in the two decades of reform preceding 1789, during which the concepts have manifest political connotations.

As far as the career of the concept of *reform* in those decades is concerned, it is important to emphasise the significant *hause* in the use of the word paralleling the British campaign for parliamentary reform, as well as the numerous reforms and reform efforts in France, Italy, and Spain. Yet, according to Minard, the term *reform* seemed to disappear from the *vocabulaire gouvernemental* shortly before the outbreak of the French Revolution and turned into a keyword of the political opposition.<sup>44</sup> Opponents of the Revolution, such as Edmund Burke, were to contribute enormously to the semantic development of the notion of *reform*. It was opposed by Burke as a valuable principle of experience-based rational change to the arbitrary planning and decisionistic abstraction of the French Revolution.

## V. Reform and Utopia

We find Lt. *renovatio* in classical, biblical, and patristic contexts (later in F. *rétablissement*, *redressement*, *renouvellement*) as a synonym for *reform* in its restorative acception.<sup>45</sup> F./E. *innovation*, E. *improvement*, G. *Verbesserung*, and F. *amélioration* are synonymous with the progressive-melioristic notion of *reform*. As Innes has demonstrated in her instructive conceptual history of E. *reform*, the word *innovation* was originally rather negatively connoted in English and was associated with a ruinous obsession with innovation of the *innovators*. The word *improvement*, which identifies the innovation one aspires to as *mélioration*, *advance*, *twist to something better*, was, by contrast, positively connoted.<sup>46</sup> It was only in the course of the eighteenth century, accompanying the rising importance and frequency of the word *reform*, that the word *innovation* was upgraded and finally became a positively connoted term in English and French (compare F. *novation*, *nouvelleté*); “[*des*] innovations utiles qu'on peut introduire dans l'État” (Jaucourt) are equivalent to useful reforms. Apart from that, this appreciation of *innovation*, as Karl-Heinz Bender has demonstrated, prepared the positivization of the notion of revolution, which, as a political notion, implied a parallel positivization of the concept of *révolte* according to Bender.<sup>47</sup>

The year 1789 was to prove that it was possible to revolutionise the world. In the preceding years, the success of single initiatives and projects in many European countries had demonstrated that the world could be reformed step by step and within a given system, at least partially. It was, of course, impossible to make it completely anew, to recreate it (E. *to re-form*; F. *reformer* instead of *réformer*). Already in Early Modern Italy several authors, among them Muratori, had stated the impossibility to “riformare il mondo”<sup>48</sup> in a fundamental sense [It. *ri-formare*].

Traditionally, reform and utopia were in clear opposition to each other.<sup>49</sup> The existing world cannot be replaced by the best of all possible worlds, it cannot be recreated, neither by the elimination of all abuses (F. *réformer les abus*; E. *reformation of abuses*) through reform, nor by a complete reform in the sense of a return to a perfect and original order (a *Restauration*) or by a comprehensive reform in the sense of a creation of a perfect world.<sup>50</sup>

## VI. Occurrences in Some Lexicographical Resources and Databases

It might be worthwhile to take a closer look at some concrete occurrences to be found in the languages discussed here. My main focus will be on the history and historical semantics of the French word.<sup>51</sup>

What has to be reformed are E. *abuses*, F. *des abus*, G. *Missbräuche* (today one would rather say *Missstände*); this current syntagma – *réformer des abus* etc. – has been inscribed quite early into the reform discourse of the single languages.<sup>52</sup> There were, however, two ways of reading this syntagma and of conceiving reform: On the one hand, reformers aimed at single, concrete, and explicitly required reforms, which had to be taken cautiously, slowly, without (over)hastiness,<sup>53</sup> i.e. gradually, step by step and stage by stage (*degrés de réforme*), and the pace of which either had to be slowed down or accelerated. Such concrete reforms had to be planned thoroughly (*projets de réforme*, *projets d'amélioration et de réforme*) and their strategies had to be thought over, so that they finally could be successful (*les moyens d'une bonne réforme*, *Reformationsoperationen*<sup>54</sup>). On the other hand, reforms had to be comprehensive. If the abuses were inherent to the system itself, i.e. chronological, reformers thus had to establish a *regno delle riforme*<sup>55</sup> so that the reforms had to be launched based on a comprehensive reform programme. Finally, the process had to be driven by fixed principles.<sup>56</sup> At any rate, before planning and carrying out a reform, it seemed necessary to consider whether reforms were possible at all, i.e. with regard to a particular form of government,<sup>57</sup> a certain type of abuse or more comprehensive deficiencies in the system itself. It is in this context that the pertinent concept of *reformability*<sup>58</sup> appears, becoming current in the eighteenth century.

The outstanding political thinkers of the French Enlightenment – Montesquieu, Rousseau, Voltaire, and Condorcet – used the term *reform* (also) in a political sense.<sup>59</sup> Searching the ARTFL database,<sup>60</sup> the *Encyclopédie*, the *Journal de Trévoux*, and FRANTEXT for occurrences of F. *réforme*,<sup>61</sup> one yields 111 occurrences for F. *réforme* (noun) on the *Journal de Trévoux* (of the 1750s) and 212 for the *Encyclopédie* (of the 1750s and 1760s). FRANTEXT, a database of the ARTFL, which also contains literary sources in a narrow sense, lists altogether 3,923 occurrences for F. *réforme* (noun), starting with Calvin. Forty occurrences are given for the seventeenth century and 400 occurrences date from eighteenth century before the French Revolution, a result that can be seen as evidence for the career of the word in French.<sup>62</sup>

The superordinate entry in the *Encyclopédie* is the one written by the Chevalier de Jaucourt. Being entitled *Réformation, Réforme* (Synon.), it covers the complete scope of both meaning and application. That the words *réformation* and *réforme* were still used almost synonymously confirms what has been stated thus far. However, Jaucourt distinguishes between two different usages of *réformation* and *réforme*: According to him, *réformation* designates the reform process as such and *réforme* the result of this process, i.e. the reformed state.<sup>63</sup> It is difficult to reconstruct the actual topicality of this lexical distinction between reform process (fr. *réformation*) and the enacted reform (fr. *réforme*) with respect to the historical context.<sup>64</sup> Entries on *réformation* and *réforme* in those areas where the term was traditionally most commonly used in French follow the entry written by Jaucourt, i.e. in the areas of theology, military, and jurisprudence. The meaning of *réforme* in legal terminology (also in the sense of *révision*) is explained in the article on *réformer*.<sup>65</sup> The occurrences recorded in the *Encyclopédie* and in the (Jesuit) *Journal de Trévoux* excellently document the synonymy of *réforme* and *réformation*; a large number of occurrences refers to the Reformation and to both spiritual and monastic reforms (i.e. of monasteries, orders, and the like). The use of *réforme* is highly frequent in the military context. Here, the word is employed as a specific technical term. As such one can find it also in the context of royal decrees<sup>66</sup> and coinage. In the aforementioned sources, the term *réforme* mainly relates to law and administration, politics, economy, and taxation, innovations in the scientific<sup>67</sup> domain, and the arts (regarding this, *réforme/réformation* are often used as synonyms of *révolution[s]*). Moreover, the reform discourse often refers to planned reforms in the area of institutionalised education and universities. The term *réforme de la langue/language reform* is also rather frequent.<sup>68</sup> However, *theatre reform*, which one incidentally finds in the quoted French sources, is extraordinarily frequent in the Italian sources (Goldoni); *calendar reform* is a current terminus technicus. Apart from that, there are remarkable uses of *réforme* derived from *reformer* (sans accent aigu) in

the sense of *working something material, reconverting something to its original form, or transforming something into a fitting but new form*<sup>69</sup> (not only with reference to craftsmanship and technology but also to the textual composition etc.). It has to be underlined in this context that *réform\** (*réformation, réforme*) has on the one hand a traditional, rather technical, administrative-legal meaning, and that it can refer to the physical production and shaping of material on the other hand. These two semantic strands should not be neglected when reconstructing the historical meaning of the Enlightenment notion of *reform*: A *reform* may also be a complex, quasi-technical procedure which is enacted and equally ensured by an institution.

The already mentioned term *réforme des mœurs*,<sup>70</sup> a *topos* established in antiquity (compare Seneca's postulate of a *reformatio morum*) and regaining currency in the Early Modern period, recurs in many texts. Innes has convincingly demonstrated how the originally religious concept of *reformation of manners* in Early Modern and Enlightenment England became at first an ethical maxim and then an educational and charity programme.<sup>71</sup> The postulate of *self-reform* (in French: *se réformer*)<sup>72</sup> originated from this religious Protestant (Anglican and Pietistic) context. According to Innes, the ethical use of *reform* – as far as the individual is considered – remained preponderant in England even throughout the second half of the eighteenth century.<sup>73</sup> That the idea of a *moral reform* was still a driving force in the political (in the broadest sense) reform movement in the second half of the century is for sure unmistakeable. In this respect, it can be pointed out that Béla Kapossy has hinted at filiations between the reform discourse in Enlightenment and both the French moralist vocabulary of the seventeenth century and the Protestant and Pietistic discourse.<sup>74</sup>

FRANTEXT comprises literary-fictional sources and helps us to complete the range of meaning of *réform\** that becomes manifest in the *Encyclopédie* and in the *Journal de Trévoux*. To the meanings listed previously one can add *réformer* in the sense of a transformation or rationalisation or reduction of family or love relationships, or as a change in one's personal behaviour. This semantic aspect manifests itself in French comedies, to name but one such source (Lesage, for instance: "faire une réforme dans une maison"). In French *réformer* can adopt even another meaning: *to tidy up, to declutter*.<sup>75</sup> One might find traces of this everyday meaning in the Enlightenment concept of *réforme*.

## VII. Occurrences in the Particular Languages: Priorities, Dominances, and Interferences

In order to retrace the semantic contours of the European *reform* concept in the Age of Enlightenment, one has to keep in mind the enduring competition between the words *reformation* and *reform*, the lexical competition

between *revolution* and *reform* in the decades before 1789, as well as frequently used synonyms such as *innovation*, *improvement*, G. *Verbesserung* – aspects which I have already hinted at. It might occasionally have become clear that a history of concepts not genuinely interested in lexical aspects risks ignoring pertinent shades of meaning and important connotations of a concept. To cite just a few examples of this sensitivity of the concept to linguistic details, one might hint at the double meaning of *reform* in the sense of a concrete, manual, and technical creative activity, i.e. in the meaning of *working on sth.*, *shaping*, *modeling*, *repairing it*,<sup>76</sup> and, in contrast, in the sense of a reformist activity in conventional terms: an ambivalence differentiated in French in the distinct verb forms F. *reformer* and F. *réformer*, corresponding to E. *re-form* and *reform*. In the other languages, this ambivalence is latent. What can also easily be overlooked in a history of the concept of *reform*, just to stick to an aforementioned example, is the already mentioned concrete, practical, and trivial meaning of *réformer/riformare*, namely *turning something upside down, tidying up*.<sup>77</sup> In spite of all, mostly legitimate, objections raised against the far too strong focus on lexical occurrences in an old-style approach to conceptual history, one should not neglect the advantages of this kind of lexicological account and of detailed analyses of the different usages of words in diverging national and historical contexts. Apart from that, it seems inevitable to trace back the etymologies and histories of the words corresponding the very concepts. Otherwise, like in our case, one might not understand that *reformatio/reformation/reform* was deeply ambiguous, possessing both a retrospective-restorative and a prospective-melioristic meaning (until a shift towards the latter one occurred in the course of the eighteenth century). One might not understand either that a moral meaning was inherent in the concept right from the beginning and until late into the eighteenth century. One also might not comprehend that the notion of *reform* as a concept of Enlightenment philosophy of history, *reform* as *Erwartungsbegriff* (Koselleck), is founded in traditional ideas of religious salvation.

Anna Maria Rao, who gave a detailed description of the reform efforts in eighteenth century Italy at both regional and supra-regional levels, has emphasised the trans- and international dimension of Enlightenment reforms:

The increasingly public nature of the debates on reform, together with the circulation of men and ideas from one state to another, made possible the construction of political and administrative reform projects in which different governments shared common goals. The reform movement took different forms in each state, but it was still remarkably unified in its aims and goals.<sup>78</sup>

The lexical data referred to by Rao cover English, French, German, and Italian, but there is a clear focus on French language history. This

preference in terms of language history is because in French there were many different factors to contribute to the dynamisation of the respective lexical items discussed in the previous section. Apart from that, it was French that had spread the word *réforme*, co-existing then with the word *réformation*, even before the same process could take place in English and German; E. *reform* and G. *Reform* were subsequently introduced into English and German. Although F. *réforme* was continuously used synonymously with F. *réformation/Réformation* and therefore retained its traditional meanings, F. *réforme* served as a portmanteau term to establish an open semantic field where the semantic shifts within the European reform languages could operate.

Despite the semantic richness and innovative capacity of French reform vocabulary in the eighteenth century – see, for instance, the neologism *irréformabilité*<sup>79</sup> – that had an evident impact on the other languages as well, a contribution dealing with the history of the concept *reform\** demands a closer look at the lexical and terminological richness of the Italian language (in particular within the legal, political, and economic domains) in the Early Modern period. The early occurrences of It. *riforma* – in legal and political-administrative but also in theological and religious contexts towards the end of the Middle Ages and in Early Modern Italy – are comparatively well documented.<sup>80</sup> There is far less evidence in the other languages in the same epoch for that richness of occurrences. This fact can be explained by the persisting influence of Latin on this particular kind of sources in Medieval Europe. In Early Modern Italy, It. *riforma* was, for example, very often used in political and administrative contexts by Guicciardini and Machiavelli. Furthermore, it is interesting to state that the inextricable link between political and moral aspects in the Enlightenment reform discourse became lexically manifest in Early Modern Italy, for instance in Savonarola's rhetorics.<sup>81</sup> If one reviews the rich source material available for It. *riforma\** contained in the Italian historical dictionaries, one realises that almost all shades of meaning attested in our survey of the semantics and usages of *réforme* in the *Encyclopédie* and in the *Journal de Trévoux* for eighteenth century French were already manifested in the Italian Early Modern discourse. This is not only confirmed by lexicographically preferred sources such as legal and administrative texts, decrees, historiographic sources etc., but can also be confirmed when researching on the Italian database *Biblioteca Italiana Zanichelli*, which contains a large bulk of literary texts. The history of the Italian word proves that in pre-eighteenth century Italian the term It. *riforma\** was used in a semantically extraordinarily differentiated fashion and that there existed many variants of it.<sup>82</sup> *Riformazione* (also *riformazione*, in the sense of *ricostituzione*, *re-formation*, *new formation*), however, remained marginal in Italian, sporadically used in the context of monastic reforms and rather rarely employed in the setting of the protestant Reformation. Italian lacks a lexically differentiated theological and

church historical semantic strand of It. *riforma*, which in other countries in which E. Reform/G. Reform/F. *réforme* was established to parallel E. *Reformation*/G. *Reformation*/F. *réformation* was expressed by the originally polyvalent word *reformation*.

In the eighteenth century, *riforma\** remained of highly frequent and polyvalent use in Italian. Christof Dipper has pointed out the prominence of the idea and notion of It. *riforma* in Milanese reformism and particularly hinted at the use of the word in the Enlightenment periodical *Il Caffè*.<sup>83</sup> According to Dipper, in Northern Italy the word and its synonyms were used more and more for administrative measures aimed at the improvement of contemporary political, social, and economical conditions. Another important aspect in the history of the Italian usages of the word has to be singled out in the famous penal reforms postulated by Cesare Beccaria. In the context of Milanese reform discourse, one must recall that the number of jurists among the Milanese reformers was relatively high, and that the Upper Italian reform discourse was in constant dialogue with the Habsburgs' enlightened absolutism and connected to Austrian reform language. Throughout the French Revolution and the *Triennio giacobino*, the term It. *riforma\** was frequently and creatively applied in Italian political discourse.<sup>84</sup>

The Spanish history of the concept cannot be discussed here. To name but one recent publication, in his study Gabriel Paquette has shown in detail that also in Bourbon Spain various kinds of reform were debated and initiated.<sup>85</sup> According to Paquette, it was not the Spanish word *reforma\** but the word field clustering around *proyectos* which dominated the Spanish reform discourse.<sup>86</sup> Since the source texts quoted by Paquette are only given in the English translation, his account lacks material of direct relevance for the history of the word/concept Sp. *reforma\**. Research on the *Nuevo tesoro lexicográfico de la lengua española* reveals that there are some occurrences of Sp. *reforma* dating from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries corresponding roughly to the historical semantic profile of *reform* in the other languages in the respective time span. However, the occurrences do not show the same semantic complexity inherent to the French, Italian, and English conceptualisations of *reform*. The Spanish superlative form *reformadísimo* documented in 1803 indicates that there must have been indeed some kind of dynamisation and ideologisation within the notion of *reform*.<sup>87</sup>

The Franco-British/Scottish cultural ties were strong in the eighteenth century, recently confirmed by a series of interesting publications.<sup>88</sup> This strong interrelatedness can also be observed in the history of words and concepts and in the history of translations. The English history of the word/concept *reformation/reform* was analysed in detail by Innes<sup>89</sup> and does not have to be repeated here. It is sufficient to highlight only a few turning points in the semantics of the words in English, which seem to be of great relevance for the European semantics of *reform\** in the eighteenth

century in general. The word *reformation* was most pervasively used in English until well into the eighteenth century, usually carrying a legal or religious meaning. Even though the concept of E. *reform* is already attested in the 1660s,<sup>90</sup> it only gained currency in the eighteenth century, namely as a French loanword. It is only with the parliamentary reforms that there is, according to Innes, an “efflorescence of reform rhetoric” in the 1780s: “By 1782, the slogan ‘parliamentary reform’ had general currency. Thereafter, down to the 1830s and indeed beyond, *reform* in English public life was connoted with ‘parliamentary reform’ first and foremost.”<sup>91</sup> It was not, however, only the high frequency of E. *reform* in the late eighteenth century and the specification of the concept by both conservatives, such as Burke,<sup>92</sup> and radicals such as Paine, Price, Priestley, and Godwin, towards the end of the century<sup>93</sup> that was important for the European development of the concept. From an onomasiological perspective, it is also interesting to consider the rather frequent replacement of E. *reformation* by E. *improvement*, which has affected the English language since the seventeenth century. According to Minard, this was caused by the militant connotation of the word *reformation* during the Glorious Revolution, so that the term had lost its positive connotation. As maintained by Innes, the replacement of E. *reformation* by E. *improvement* and other synonyms was the consequence of the still strong moral and disciplinary connotations of Puritan origin which had been inherent in the English concept of *reformation* for a long time.<sup>94</sup> As mentioned before, in contrast to *improvement*, E. *innovation* was initially negatively connotated and was positivised in the course of the eighteenth century, i.e. the same period in which F. *innovation* gradually developed a positive meaning in French.<sup>95</sup> The traditionally positive connotation of E. *improvement* is reflected in the high frequency and the positive undertone of G. *Verbesserung* in German, a word that well into the eighteenth century successfully competed with the loanword *Reform*.

In 1803, it was Louis-Sébastien Mercier who criticised that French was immune to the fertile impact of other languages: “Nous avons trop redouté un commerce étroit avec les langues étrangères; notre langue serait devenue plus forte, plus harmonieuse, si, à l'exemple des Anglais et des Allemands, nous eussions su nous enrichir d'une foule de mots, qui étaient à notre bienséance.”<sup>96</sup> English and German had, by contrast, benefited from linguistic transfers. The English and French influences, or more precisely the English-German and French-German interplays, became likewise manifest in the German-speaking area. Since Eike Wolgast has instructively elucidated the history of the German concepts of *Reform/Reformation* in his detailed contribution on *Reform/Reformation* to *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe*, only a few parallels and intersections in the use of *Reform* and *Verbesserung* in German, on the one hand, and English and French, on the other hand, shall be pointed out here. As a foreign word, according to Wolgast, the word *Réforme*<sup>97</sup> was listed

in German dictionaries with the equivalents G. *Veränderung*, *Besserung* since the end of the seventeenth century.<sup>98</sup> At the beginning of the eighteenth century the German word *Reform* was borrowed from French, but was not entirely lexicalised until the end of the eighteenth century due to the lexical competition with G. *Reformation* (since the seventeenth century established as a technical term in the domain of administrative law, in the eighteenth century a current political term) and G. (Ver-) *Besserung*.<sup>99</sup> Even the Prussian reforms were only rarely labelled as *Reforms* by contemporaries.<sup>100</sup> The higher frequency of G. *Verbesserung* (frequent also in French, *amélioration*) compared to G. *Reform* and the rare usages of G. *Reform* might be partly explained by the long tradition and dense semantics of the German concept of *Reformation*. That *Reform* was not really current in German in the eighteenth century can be confirmed by the comparison of different translations of relevant source texts drafted in the following section. The relevant research concerned with the history of the concept of *Reform* in Germany points towards a small number of philosophers of the late eighteenth century in whose arguments the concept of *Reform* is relatively prominent. This is not only true for Schlözer, who in his *Allgemeines Staatsrecht* insists on the necessity of a more precise political terminology in Germany; sometimes he synonymously uses the words *Reformation* and *Reform*.<sup>101</sup> It is also particularly true for Kant. In Kant's works the word *Reform* is not frequent but used in a precise and highly instructive way:

*Reform* in opposition to *Revolution* (*Metaphysik der Sitten*, *Rechtslehre*, Allgemeine Anmerkung, AA VI), the act of reforming in accordance with principles a priori corresponding to the practice of constitutional law instead of “am Staat [zu] flicken wie es alle sich so nennende Praktiker gewohnt sind” (*Zum ewigen Frieden*, Vorarbeiten, AA XXIII, 163), and finally the postulation of a “wahre Reform der Denkungsart”, “a true reform of the way of thinking” in his Beantwortung der Frage: Was ist Aufklärung? (*Answering the question: What is Enlightenment?*) (AA VIII, 36).<sup>102</sup>

This Kantian formulation – “a true reform of the way of thinking” as the basis of *Aufklärung* – reflects the abstraction and universalisation of the concept of *Reform*, becoming the epitome of the intellectual ethos of Enlightenment in the late eighteenth century. Closer to the current German vocabulary was Isaak Iselin, for example, when he talked about a “Verbesserung der Denkungsart” (“improvement of the way of thinking”).<sup>103</sup> It is quite remarkable that Kant postulates, in his essay on Enlightenment, not a *Revolution*, which might have been a possible lexical choice in 1783, but a *Reform* in the way of thinking. In the milieu of the *philosophes* and particularly within Voltaire's networks, a *révolution des esprits* as a condition for the victory of Enlightenment had been propagated.<sup>104</sup> In the *Vorrede B* to the second edition of the *Kritik der reinen Vernunft* (*Critique of Pure Reason*), Kant uses the expression “Revolution

der Denkart” (B XII, AA III)<sup>105</sup> (“revolution of the way of thinking”) several times along with the expression “Veränderung”/“Umänderung der Denkart”. The expression “eine wahre Reform der Denkungsart” (“a true reform of the way of thinking” (in *Was ist Aufklärung?*) was not entirely new, since it had already appeared in Italian in the 1760s, for instance.<sup>106</sup> Such congruencies may serve as evidence for the fact that there were strong interrelations and overlaps within the enlightened reform discourse in Europe, even in its most abstract manifestations.

### VIII. Transfer and Translation: A Way to Further Research, a Corpus to Work on

Here ends our exploration into the language of the enlightened reform discourse. This chapter could only provide a sketch of the various branches and strands of the history of the word and concept of *reform*. The incompleteness and the random character of this account are evident. Such incompleteness and randomness might be reduced to some extent by taking a multilingual corpus under examination which should not only cover the relevant time span but also be thematically homogenous.<sup>107</sup> For this sake, one might use a multilingual corpus consisting of texts on the reform of Catholic Italy and the reform of the status of the Jews and their translations, which all were published between 1760 and 1790. Translations have proved to be excellent tools for spreading political vocabulary. Due to the results achieved by comparative translation research in the meantime, also with respect to the Enlightenment period,<sup>108</sup> comparisons of different translations of the same text into different languages, accurate comparisons focussed on lexical aspects might be promising for further research on the historical semantics of the notion of *reform*. One should, however, be aware of the fact that during the eighteenth century, at least in many cases, translations into French served as intermediary translations for translations into third languages, a fact very rarely indicated by the translators.

The first corpus consists of a reformist text and its translations, a text Venturi has dealt with in great detail in his *Settecento riformatore*,<sup>109</sup> written by the polyglot Italian author Carlantonio Pilati: *Di una Riforma d’Italia ossia dei mezzi di riformare i più cattivi costumi e le più perniciose leggi d’Italia*, published for the first time in 1767. Pilati’s work has been translated into French and German and the respective translations have been thoroughly studied, in turn, by Serena Luzzi – but they still lack a lexical analysis.<sup>110</sup> The title refers to *riforma* – a word which, by the way, does not appear very frequently in the text – which obviously has a religious and political double meaning in this case. Pilati’s notion of *reform* is primarily coined by religion.<sup>111</sup> In certain passages of the text a return to the pure origins of Christianity (in the sense of the restorative notion of *reform*) is postulated, thus echoing Luther’s Reformation; but

there is also a pointed emphasis on the future (in the sense of the melioristic notion of *reform*). Pilati conceives reform in more general terms, in those of a universal reform, a Pilatian concept which to Venturi seemed as end in itself.<sup>112</sup> Pilati's multifaceted concept of *riforma* (and its synonyms) is semantically instructive and the terminology of his book reminds the abundant traditional Italian vocabulary of change (*renovatio, ristabilimento*). The text was not only translated into German (the title is rather revealing in this respect – *Von einer Reformation in Italien*) and French but was well received in the respective countries and got some reviews.<sup>113</sup>

## Corpus (1)

[Pilati, Carl' Antonio] *Di una Riforma d'Italia ossia dei mezzi di riformare i più cattivi costumi e le più perniciose leggi d'Italia*. 2nd ed. 2 vols. [Chur], 1770.

- F. (1:) *L'Italie réformée, ou Nouveau plan de gouvernement pour l'Italie, développé dans les très-humbles remontrances du peuple romain au Souverain Pontife, pour le rétablissement de l'agriculture, des Arts et du Commerce; et dans un Traité abrégé des lois civiles, Ouvrage traduit de l'Italien [par Charles-François Lebrun]* (Rimini [Paris] 1769).<sup>114</sup>
- F. (2:) *Projet d'une Réforme à faire en Italie, ou Moyens de corriger les abus les plus dangereuses, et de réformer les Loix les plus pernicieuses, établies en Italie, Ouvrage traduit de l'Italien [par Giovanni Manzon 1769].*<sup>115</sup>
- G. (1:) *Von einer Reformation in Italien, oder von den Mitteln, die gefährlichsten Mißbräuche und die schädlichsten Gesetze dieses Landes zu verbessern*. Nach der neuesten Ausgabe, aus dem Italiänischen übersetzt, 1775.<sup>116</sup>

The second corpus to be suggested here for lexical analyses consists of texts on the reform of the status of the Jews and the corresponding translations:<sup>117</sup>

## Corpus (2)

\*Dohm, Christian Konrad Wilhelm von, *Über die bürgerliche Verbesserung der Juden*. Berlin: bei Friedrich Nicolai, 1781.<sup>118</sup>

- F. *De la réforme politique des Juifs*, par C. G. Dohm, conseiller de guerre, archiviste et secrétaire privé au département des affaires étrangères de S.M. le Roi de Prusse, traduit de l'allemand [par Jean Bernoulli] (Dessau: dans la librairie des auteurs et des artistes, 1782).

It. *Riforma politica degli Ebrei*, del consigliere C.G. Dohm archivista e segretario privato del Dipartimento degli affari esteri di S.M. il re

di Prussia. Versione dal tedesco (Mantova: dalla Tipografia Virgiliana, 1807).<sup>119</sup>

[E. *Concerning the amelioration of the civil status of the Jews*. Translated by Helen Lederer, Cincinnati, Ohio 1957].

\*Honoré Gabriel de Riqueti Mirabeau, *Sur Moses Mendelssohn, sur la réforme politique des Juifs, et en particulier sur la révolution tentée en leur faveur en 1753 dans la grande Bretagne* (London [?] 1787).

G.: *Über Moses Mendelssohn. Über die bürgerliche Verbesserung der Juden, und insbesondere über die zum Besten derselben im Jahr 1753 in England vorgefallene Veränderung*. Aus dem Französischen mit Anmerkungen (Berlin: Maurer, 1787).

\*Abbé Henri Jean-Baptiste Grégoire, *Essai sur la régénération physique, morale et politique des Juifs* (Metz 1789).<sup>120</sup>

E.: *An Essay on the physical, moral, and political reformation of the Jews*; a work crowned by the Royal Society of Arts and Sciences at Metz. Translated from the French (London: C. Forster, Poultry; Edinburgh: G. Mudie, 1791).

English translation by Laura Kersten

## Notes

1. L.A. Muratori, Undated Submission to Rinaldo I. d'Este (Duca di Modena), Archivio di Stato di Modena; cited from C. Dipper, *Politischer Reformismus und begrifflicher Wandel: Eine Untersuchung des historisch-politischen Wortschatzes der Mailänder Aufklärung (1764–1796)* (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1976), 111, note 224.
2. E. Hellmuth, “Why Does Corruption Matter? Reforms and Reform Movements in Britain and Germany in the Second Half of the Eighteenth Century”, in *Reform in Great Britain and Germany 1750–1850*, ed. T.C.W. Blanning and P. Wende (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 5–23.
3. T. Ball, J. Farr, and R.L. Hanson, eds., *Political Innovation and Conceptual Change* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 2.
4. “Begriffe haben . . . eine andere zeitliche Binnenstruktur als die Ereignisse, die sie auslösen helfen oder die sie erfassen sollen. Dieser Befund gilt selbst für die neuzeitlichen Bewegungsbegriffe, die seit dem 18. Jahrhundert unseren gesamten Sprachhaushalt auf einen notwendigen Wandel, auf Wechsel und auf planbare Veränderungen hin einstimmen. Die zentralen Leitbegriffe lauten Entwicklung, Fortschritt, Geschichte selber, Reform, Krise, Evolution und . . . Revolution. Es sind nun genau diese Begriffe, die rein semantisch einen eigentümlich stabilisierenden Effekt auslösen. Sie stellen sprachliche Gemeinsamkeiten durch alle politischen Lager her, worüber auch im Einzelnen gestritten wird.” R. Koselleck, *Begriffsgeschichten: Studien zur Semantik und Pragmatik der politischen und sozialen Sprache [ . . . ]*, ed. C. Dutt (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2006), 45.
5. The term is problematic and rather contested; Daniel Fulda has recently attempted a redefinition of the concept, compare D. Fulda, “Sattelzeit: Karriere und Problematik eines kulturwissenschaftlichen Zentralbegriffs”, in *Sattelzeit? Historiographiegeschichtliche Revisionen*, ed. É. Décultot and D. Fulda (Berlin; Boston, MA: De Gruyter, 2016), 1–16.

6. E. Müller and F. Schmieder, *Begriffsgeschichte und historische Semantik: Ein kritisches Kompendium* (Berlin: Suhrkamp, 2016), 905–928. This compendium is related to the Berlin Zentrum für Literatur- und Kulturforschung, which has installed a platform on Begriffsgeschichte: [www.begriffsgeschichte.de/doku.php](http://www.begriffsgeschichte.de/doku.php) (accessed March 21, 2017).
7. J. Innes, “‘Reform’ in English Public Life: The Fortunes of a Word”, in *Rethinking the Age of Reform: Britain 1780–1850*, ed. A. Burns and J. Innes (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 71–97.
8. R. Reichardt, *Reform und Revolution bei Condorcet: Ein Beitrag zur späten Aufklärung in Frankreich* (Bonn: Röhrscheid, 1973), 312–362; C. Dipper, “Réforme”, in *Handbuch politisch-sozialer Grundbegriffe in Frankreich*, ed. R. Reichardt and H.-J. Lüsebrink (München: Oldenbourg, 2000), 19-20:3–25; H. Reinalter, “‘Reform’ und ‘Revolution’: Zwei historische Schlüsselbegriffe im ausgehenden 18. und frühen 19. Jahrhundert”, in *Émancipation, Réforme, Révolution: Hommage à Marita Gilli*, ed. D. Minary (Paris: Presses Universitaires Franc-Comtoises, 2000), 327–338; P. Minard, “La ‘réforme’ en France et en Angleterre au XVIIIe siècle: Sens et fortunes d’un mot d’ordre”, *Revue d’histoire moderne et contemporaine* 56, no. 4 (Supplement 2009): 5–13.
9. E. Wolgast, “Reform, Reformation”, in *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe: Historisches Lexikon zur politisch-sozialen Sprache in Deutschland*, ed. O. Brunner, W. Conze, and R. Koselleck (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1984), 5:313–360; C. Zimmermann, “Reform”, in *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie*, ed. J. Ritter, K. Gründer, and G. Gabriel (Basel: Schwabe, 1992), 8:409–416; Reinalter, “‘Reform’ und ‘Revolution’”.
10. Dipper, *Politischer Reformismus*, 1976.
11. G.B. Paquette, *Enlightenment, Governance, and Reform in Spain and Its Empire, 1759–1808* (Hounds Mills, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008); G.B. Paquette, ed., *Enlightened Reform in Southern Europe and Its Atlantic Colonies, c. 1750–1830* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009). Concerning Italian reformism, compare A.M. Rao, “Enlightenment and Reform”, in *Early Modern Italy 1550–1796*, ed. J.A. Marino (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 229–252.
12. Venturi himself provides a definition of his concept of *reformer* in a letter to Giuseppe Giarrizzo dated the 16th February 1962: “Per riformatori, sia pure con larghezza, dobbiamo intendere soltanto coloro che ebbero un contatto diretto con il mondo dell’economia, dell’amministrazione, delle cose, insomma. Non economisti teorici, né puri esecutori ed amministratori, ma appunto progettisti di riforme e polemisti di esse.” Franco Venturi, cited from A. Viarengo, *Franco Venturi, politica e storia nel Novecento* (Rome: Carocci editore, 2014), 229. John Robertson discusses pointedly Venturi’s historiography on European enlightened reformism, compare J. Robertson, “Enlightenment, Reform, and Monarchy in Italy”, in *Enlightened Reform in Southern Europe*, ed. G. Paquette (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009), 23–35.
13. “Koselleck himself had conceived such a project comparing French, British, and German concepts, with three columns running next to each other to enable direct national comparisons. But he concluded that the non-synchronicity of national experiences and the lack of a metalanguage for comparison rendered such a project virtually impossible.” J.-W. Müller, “On Conceptual History”, in *Rethinking Modern European Intellectual History*, ed. D.M. McMahon and S. Moyn (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 74–93, note 21.
14. Concerning the internationalisation of Koselleck’s *Begriffsgeschichte*, compare the highly instructive chapter in Müller and Schmieder, *Begriffsgeschichte*,

- 395–401. For a concrete initiative compare, “The European Conceptual History Project (ECHP): Mission Statement”, *Contributions to the History of Concepts* 6, no. 1 (Summer 2011): 111–116.
15. “conceptual history remained a related [to Koselleck’s *Historik*], but in many ways quite undertheorized, project. In the end, much of what he wrote either about or for the famous lexicon of *Basic Historical Concepts* (*Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe*) takes a pragmatic approach. That pragmatism, however, also helped *Begriffsgeschichte* travel.” Müller, “On Conceptual History”, 74. In a similar manner Ball, Farr and Hanson had stated, “Since there is no one right way to construct a conceptual history, the editors have not attempted to impose any orthodoxy of method or approach.” Ball, Farr and Hanson, *Political Innovation*, IX.
  16. As a methodological example, see A. Alimento, “Translation, Reception and Enlightened Reform: The Case of Forbonnais in Eighteenth-Century Political Economy”, *History of European Ideas* 40, no. 8 (2014): 1011–1025.
  17. Wolgast, “Reform, Reformation”, 313–314.
  18. G.B. Ladner, *The Idea of Reform: Its Impact on Christian Thought and Action in the Age of the Fathers* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1959).
  19. K.E. Georges, *Der Neue Georges: Ausführliches Handwörterbuch Lateinisch-Deutsch* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2013), 4098: “reformatio . . . I die Umgestaltung [ . . . ] II die Neugestaltung, Erneuerung [ . . . ] III die Zurückgabe.” In Medieval Latin, the positive and constructive meaning of *reformation* is unfolded, compare R. Ashdowne, D.R. Howlett, and R.E. Latham, *Dictionary of Medieval Latin from British Sources* (London: Oxford University Press, 2001), 13:2708: “reformatio 1 (act of) changing or altering (for the better), amendment, reform. . . ; 2 (act of) restoring (to previous form or condition) restoration. . . ; 3 (act of) restoring (to the possession of. . . ), giving back. . . . 4 (act of) reconciling, settling or resolving (dispute or difference), correcting or making amends for (transgression, error, or misdeed), reconciliation, restitution.”
  20. “die ausdrückliche Verbindung des qualitativ besseren früheren Zustands mit der Rückverwandlung”, Wolgast, “Reform, Reformation”, 313.
  21. Ibid., 313.
  22. Ibid., 316.
  23. “On the basis of the distinctions made, the idea of reform may now be defined as the idea of free, intentional and ever perfectible, multiple, prolonged and ever repeated efforts by man to reassert and augment values pre-existent in the spiritual-material compound of the world. . . . It is not unreasonable to expect that the idea of reform, because of its content, may have played a particularly important part in historical change.” Ladner, *The Idea of Reform*, 35.
  24. Wolgast, “Reform, Reformation”, 314.
  25. Innes remarks on *reform* as institutional change: “There was a shift, first, towards giving the word institutional application: towards using it to mean legal change, or institutional restructuring. . . . the idea that one might ‘reform’ law had a very long heritage behind it, and there had been other institutional uses over the years.” Innes, “‘Reform’”, 85.
  26. “More than just a renaming of individual projects was in question here. Also beginning to come into shape under the umbrella of this terminology was the notion of a reforming programme: of an interconnected series of ‘reforms’ a ‘reformer’ might be expected to support.” Ibid., 86.
  27. Reichardt, *Reform und Revolution*, 312–362.

28. To give just one example: Michel de l'Hôpital, *Traité de la réformation de la justice* (s.l.: s.n., 1570).
29. Wolgast, “Reform, Reformation”, 326.
30. É. Littré, *Dictionnaire de la langue française* (Paris: Gallimard; Hachette, 1958), 6:1085; W. von Wartburg, ed., *Französisches Etymologisches Wörterbuch* (Basel: Zbinden, 1960), 10:192–194.
31. Compare Innes, “‘Reform’”, 75–76.
32. Wolgast, “Reform, Reformation”, 331–332. This dynamisation-*ecclesia reformata semper reformanda* (compare Innes, “‘Reform’”, 76)-affects also the various facets of the notion of reform: Reforms have to be continuously reformed. This dynamisation is an important condition for the coinage of the word *reformism* in the 19th century, which, of course, presupposes the experience of the Revolution.
33. “Die Aufklärungstheologie und -philosophie verstehen die Reformation dagegen vor allem als Vorstufe in der Verwirklichung der eigenen Ideale und Vorstellungen; sie weisen ihr damit eine zwar herausragende, aber nicht singuläre Bedeutung im geschichtlichen Fortschreiten zu. Die Reformation ist Anfang der geistigen Erhellung und damit Grundlage und Vorarbeit für das Werk, das die Aufklärung vollendet.” Wolgast, “Reform, Reformation”, 332.
34. Ibid., 339; Innes, “‘Reform’”, 84.
35. According to Dipper, the *riforma* postulated by Pilati can be seen as the “Italian counterpart to the Reformation in Germany”, Dipper, *Politischer Reformismus*, 200.
36. Edmund Burke 1791, quoted by N. McArthur, “Reform and Revolution”, in *The Oxford Handbook of British Philosophy in the Eighteenth Century*, ed. J.A. Harris (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 555–574, 569.
37. In English the term *reformist* is already attested in the seventeenth century and occurs frequently since 1792, compare J.A. Simpson, ed., *Oxford English Dictionary*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), 13:483: “An advocate or supporter of political reform”. In the eighteenth century, however, E. *reformist* has also a religious meaning (“un réformé, un religieux qui a pris la réforme”), compare A. Bojer, *Dictionnaire royal anglais et français* (Lyon: Bruyset, 1784), 2:601. For the Italian word history compare E. Leso, *Lingua e rivoluzione: Ricerche sul vocabolario politico italiano del triennio rivoluzionario 1796–1799* (Venice: Istituto veneto di scienze lettere ed arti, 1991), 785.
38. Compare among others Reichardt, *Reform und Revolution*, 335–344; Dipper, “Réforme”, 125–126; K.-H. Bender, *Revolutionen: Die Entstehung des politischen Revolutionsbegriffes in Frankreich zwischen Mittelalter und Aufklärung* (Munich: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 1977), 169–172; Reinalter, “‘Reform’ und ‘Revolution’”, 327–338; A. Rey, ‘Révolution’: *Histoire d'un mot* (Paris: Gallimard, 1989), 90–95.
39. Compare among others Bender, *Revolutionen*; R. Reichardt, “Die ‘Revolution’-‘ein magischer Spiegel’: Historisch-politische Begriffsbildung in französisch-deutschen Übersetzungen”, in *Kulturtransfer im Epochenumbruch: Frankreich-Deutschland 1770–1815*, ed. H.-J. Lüsebrink and R. Reichardt (Leipzig: Leipziger Universitätsverlag, 1997), 883ff.; R. Reichardt and H.-J. Lüsebrink, “‘Révolution’ à la fin du 18e siècle: Pour une relecture d'un concept-clé du siècle des Lumières”, *Mots* 16 (1988): 35–68; Rey, ‘Révolution’; H. Reinalter, “Der Revolutionsbegriff in der französischen Aufklärung”, in *Revolution und Gesellschaft: Zur Entwicklung des neuzeitlichen Revolutionsbegriffs*, ed. H. Reinalter (Innsbruck: Inn-Verlag Innsbruck, 1980),

- 53–66; D. Bouverot, “Le mot RÉVOLUTION dans les dictionnaires avant et après 1789”, *Le français moderne* 57 (1989): 3–12; W. von Rahden, “Revolution und Evolution”, *Forum Interdisziplinäre Begriffsgeschichte* 1 (2012).
40. To give an Italian example: C. Denina, *Delle Rivoluzioni d’Italia* (1769–1770).
  41. Bender, *Revolutionen*, 169–170. Bender cites Voltaire (among others) for this use of the word.
  42. “[Der Revolutionsbegriff] ist ein Reflexionsbegriff, der die Bedingungen politischen Handelns mit den Analysen geschichtlicher Erkenntnis zusammenführt. Er deckt sowohl die Machbarkeit einer Reform ab wie die Selbstläufigkeit einer Evolution – beides Gegenbegriffe, an deren Sinn ‘Revolution’ partizipiert.” Koselleck, *Begriffsgeschichten*, 241.
  43. Chevalier de Jaucourt, “Innovation”, in *Encyclopédie: ou Dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers*. <https://encyclopedie.uchicago.edu/>; cited from Minard, “La ‘réforme’”, 8.
  44. Minard, “La ‘réforme’”, 10.
  45. Compare among others Bender, *Revolutionen*, 170–173.
  46. Innes, “‘Reform’”, 77.
  47. Bender, *Revolutionen*, 170–175.
  48. “Riformare il mondo: trasformare radicalmente la situazione e l’ordine esistente attraverso l’attuazione di un progetto di totale riforma politica, sociale, religiosa, scientifica, ecc. [ed è usato per lo più in contesti ironici che sottolineano la natura utopica e non attuabile di tale progetto].” S. Battaglia, *Grande Dizionario della Lingua Italiana* (Torino: Unione Tipografica-Editrice Torinese, 1992), 16:282.
  49. Venturi’s best-known work internationally is entitled *Utopia e riforma nell’Illuminismo* (1970) (*Utopia and Reform in the Enlightenment*). For reform/utopia see among others J.C. Laursen, “Riforma e utopia”, in *Illuminismo: Un vademecum*, ed. G. Paganini and E. Tortarolo (Torino: Bollati Boringhieri, 2008), 238–251.
  50. According to Jaucourt in his article on “excommunication” in the *Encyclopédie*, only Jesus Christ can improve the world at its core, i.e. *reforming* it in the sense of *redeeming* it, without recreating it entirely: “en un mot il [Jésus-Christ] est venu pour réformer le monde, en convertissant les cœurs, sans rien changer dans l’ordre extérieur des choses humaines.” C. de Jaucourt, “Excommunication”, in *Encyclopédie*, ed. R. Morrissey, 6:225.
  51. Compare Wartburg, *Französisches Etymologisches Wörterbuch*, 10:192–194; as well as Littré, *Dictionnaire*, 6:1085; A. Rey, et al., *Dictionnaire historique de la langue française* (Paris: Le Robert, 2010), 1883.
  52. “On dit ‘La réforme des abus’, pour dire, Le Retranchement des abus qui se sont introduits.” Académie Française, *Dictionnaire de l’Académie française* (Paris: Firmin-Didot, 1694); Innes cites earlier uses of this syntagma, see Innes, “‘Reform’”; compare Wartburg, *Französisches Etymologisches Wörterbuch*, 10:192, 193. Voltaire writes, “Tout abus doit être réformé, à moins que la réforme ne soit plus dangereuse que l’abus même.” Voltaire, “Annates”, in *Questions sur l’Encyclopédie par des amateurs* (Geneva, 1774), 1:211–213.
  53. “Si l’on met de la précipitation dans la réforme, il pourra facilement arriver qu’en voulant tout corriger, on gâtera tout.” D. Diderot, “Eclectisme”, in *Encyclopédie*, 5:284.
  54. Johann Friedrich Le Bret, cited from T. Kroll, “Der Historiker als Kulturvermittler: Johann Friedrich Le Bret und die deutsche Italiengeschichtsschreibung im Zeitalter der Aufklärung”, in *Italien in Europa: Die Zirkulation der Ideen im Zeitalter der Aufklärung*, ed. F. Jung and T. Kroll (Munich: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 2014), 281–321, 299.

55. A. Verri, “Sulla interpretazione delle leggi”, in *Il Caffè*, quoted from Dipper, *Politischer Reformismus*, 113.
56. According to Minard, the meliorist notion of reform implies “la conscience accrue que tout se tient, et que la réforme de la société doit être globale: la philosophie des Lumières propose des projets d’ensemble de réorganisation de la société (le fameux ‘esprit de système’ qu’on reprochera tant à Turgot).” Minard, “La ‘réforme’”, 8.
57. According to the moderate Enlightenment, the monarchy is the most appropriate form of government to reform the state. “Mais dans une monarchie, celui de tous les gouvernemens qui réforme le plus aisément ses abus & ses mœurs sans changer de nature, le législateur voit le mal, tient le remède, & en fait usage.” J.-F. de Saint-Lambert, “Honneur”, in *Encyclopédie*, 8:290.
58. The adjective is already attested in 1483 and relatively frequent in the eighteenth century; Robert Rey, *Dictionnaire historique*, 1883. Apart from *réformable* one can also find *irréformable* and even *irréformabilité* in eighteenth century French (see note 80).
59. This aspect cannot be dealt with here in greater detail, for further investigation see the ARTFL database: *Tout Voltaire, Rousseau online*, FRANTEXT. <https://artfl-project.uchicago.edu/tout-voltaire>.
60. For a survey of the most important databases *Begriffsgeschichte* recurs to, compare Müller and Schmieder, *Begriffsgeschichte*, 784–792.
61. ARTFL database of French language texts. <http://humanities.uchicago.edu/ARTFL> (accessed March 24, 2017).
62. Last access to these databases: March 24, 2017.
63. *Réformation, Réforme* (Synon.) “La *réformation* est l’action de réformer; la *réforme* en est l’effet. Dans les tems de la réformation on travaille à mettre en règle, & l’on cherche les moyens de remédier aux abus. Dans les tems de la *réforme*, on est réglé, & les abus sont corrigés. Il arrive quelquefois que la *réforme* d’une chose dure moins que le tems qu’on a mis à sa *réformation*.” C. de Jaucourt, “Réformation, Réforme”, in *Encyclopédie*, 13:890.
64. Abbé Féraud differentiates in the same way between *réformation* as a process and *réforme* as its result: “*Réformation, Réforme*; le 1er exprime l’action de réformer; le 2d en exprime l’effet.” J.-F. Féraud, *Dictionnaire critique de la langue française* (Marseille: Chez Jean Mossy, 1788), 3:397.
65. “Réformer, en Jurisprudence, signifie *changer de forme* & *rectifier* quelqu’acte; on dit *reformer* des conclusions.” A.-G. Boucher d’Argis, “Réformer (en Jurisprudence)”, in *Encyclopédie*, 13:892. The presence/absence of the accent (*réformer/reformer*) seems to be random.
66. “Déclaration du roi, est une loi par laquelle le roi explique, réforme ou révoque une ordonnance ou édit. Les déclarations du Roi sont des lettres patentes de grande chancellerie.” A.-G. Boucher d’Argis, “Déclaration du Roi”, in *Encyclopédie*, 4:692.
67. Particularly interesting in this context is the use/occurrence of *réforme* with reference to scientific theories, natural laws and historical laws. Compare *Journal de Trévoux Mémoires pour l’histoire des sciences et des beaux arts* (April 1756): 923; *Mémoires pour l’histoire des sciences et des beaux arts* (January 1755): 344; *Mémoires pour l’histoire des sciences et des beaux arts* (February 1755): 493.
68. During the French Revolution one is concerned with “revolutionising our language” (“révolutionner notre langue”), compare Rey, ‘*Révolution*’, 164–170; J. Guilhaumou, *La langue politique et la Révolution française: De l’événement à la raison linguistique* (Paris: Méridiens-Klincksieck, 1989).
69. Jean-François Féraud, for example, has criticised in his *Dictionnaire critique de la langue française* that *reformer* and *réformer* were confused: “Reformer,

- v. act. Il difère du précédent [réformer] par la 1re syllabe, qui est un *e* muet. Réformer c'est corriger: *reformer*, c'est former de nouveau. Les Auteurs ou les Imprimeurs ne font pas toujours attention à cette distinction, qui est juste." Féraud, *Dictionnaire critique*, 3:398. Littré emphasizes the distinction as well and dates *reformer* back to the 12th century and *réformer* back to the 15th century, compare Littré, *Dictionnaire*, 1086: *reformer* = former de nouveau; *reformer* = rectifier in the sense of rétablir dans l'ancienne forme ou dans une reforme meilleure; in English to re-form and reform; re-formation and reformation, Simpson, *Oxford English Dictionary*, 481.
70. Compare among others G. Benrekassa, *Le langage des Lumières: Concepts et savoir de la langue* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1995), 47–97. Conclusive evidence can be found in Pascal's *Lettres provinciales*, Cinquième Lettre. With reference to the "morale des bons Pères jésuites", the text tells us: "Sachez donc que leur objet n'est pas de corrompre les mœurs: ce n'est pas leur dessein. Mais ils n'ont pas aussi pour unique but de les réformer. Ce serait une mauvaise politique." B. Pascal, *Les Provinciales*, ed. Michel Le Guern (Paris: Gallimard, 1987), 85.
  71. P. Slack, *From Reformation to Improvement: Public Welfare in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1999); J. Innes, "Politics and Morals: The Reformation of Manners Movement in Later Eighteenth-Century England", in *The Transformation of Political Culture: England and Germany in the Late Eighteenth Century*, ed. E. Hellmuth (London: Oxford University Press, 1990), 57–118.
  72. Multiple occurrences in Littré, *Dictionnaire*, 1086–1087; "Alors on aspire à réformer ses semblables comme soi-même." D. Diderot, "Indulgence", in *Encyclopédie*, 8:691. *Se réformer* in the sense of renoncer à ses anciennes habitudes can already be found in 1665, see Wartburg, *Französisches Etymologisches Wörterbuch*, 10:192.
  73. Innes, "'Reform'", 93.
  74. "une âme paresseuse & timide, qui redoute les travaux qu'exige toute réforme, qui s'effraye des dangers qu'elle présente." D. Diderot, "Subside", in *Encyclopédie*, 15:579.
  75. Dipper, "Réforme", 118.
  76. <https://encyclopedia.uchicago.edu> (search: *réformer*, occurrences n. 16, 20, 36, 157), each time with wrong spelling *réforme[r]* instead of *reformer*.
  77. According to the polyvalent meaning of F. *réforme*, Dipper gives the following summary: "Réforme bedeutet dort [in Frankreich] nicht nur die politische Verbesserung, sondern auch 'Reformation', obgleich dafür auch ein eigener Terminus existiert, ferner Wiederherstellung der früheren Verhältnisse, innere Einkehr und schließlich die bedingte Entlassung von Militärpersonal, ja sogar das 'Ausmisten' von überflüssigem Hausrat." Dipper, "Réforme", 118. Dipper assumes the polyvalence of F. *réforme* to be the reason for the fading out of the French term *réforme* in the 19th century: "Graude im Hinblick auf die Begriffsgeschichte von *révolution* scheint es nicht ausgeschlossen, daß die unterbliebene Konzentration auf den politischen Sprachgebrauch die semantische Widerstandskraft von *réforme* zusätzlich untergraben hat." Dipper, "Réforme", 118.
  78. Rao, "Enlightenment and Reform", 231.
  79. *Irréformable* in the meaning of "qui ne peut être réformé", according to *Französisches Etymologisches Wörterbuch* (FEW), can already be found about 1600, *irréformabilité*, according to FEW, can be found in the *Dictionnaire de Trévoux* in 1752, and later on. Wartburg, *Französisches Etymologisches Wörterbuch*, 10:193.

80. Battaglia, *Grande Dizionario*, 16:279–287.
81. Ibid., 280.
82. Apart from It. *riforma* (also *reforma*, *riforma*), there are numerous variants like for instance It. *riformazione*, *riformamento*, *riformanza* and evaluative variants and diminutives like It. *riformella*, *riformetta*, *riformuccia*.
83. Dipper, *Politischer Reformismus*, 111–113, 194–203.
84. “*Riforma e famiglia etimologica*”; Leso, *Lingua e rivoluzione*, 232.
85. Paquette, *Enlightenment, Governance, and Reform in Spain*; L.R. Díaz, *Reforma e Ilustración en la España del Siglo XVIII* (Madrid: Fundación Universitaria Española, 1975); C.C. Noel, “In the House of Reform: The Bourbon Court of Eighteenth-Century Spain”, in *Enlightened Reform in Southern Europe and Its Atlantic Colonies, c. 1750–1830*, ed. G.B. Paquette (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009), 145–165.
86. Paquette, *Enlightenment, Governance, and Reform in Spain*, 10.
87. Attested in Real Academia Española, *Nuevo tesoro lexicográfico de la lengua española*, <http://ntlle.rae.es/>. This superlative is the result of the graduation of reform in the eighteenth century (*degrés de réforme*).
88. British-French relations in the eighteenth century have been reconsidered in recent research. In respect to this important domain of enlightened cultural transfer, detailed knowledge is also relevant for the comparative research on the languages of reform: “jamais la culture politique des deux pays n'a été aussi convergente. En France comme en Angleterre, l'idée réformatrice devient une donnée essentielle du débat public. Ici, réformes de Turgot, de Necker, là-bas, réforme ‘économique’ prônée par Burke, réforme parlementaire. . . . Les deux pays vivent de manière synchrone le *wind of change* du dernier quart du siècle.” E. Dziembowski, “Remarques sur les transferts culturels franco-britanniques au XVIIIe siècle”, in *Les Circulations internationales en Europe, années 1680–années 1780*, ed. P.-Y. Beaurepaire and P. Pourchasse (Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2010), 453–467, 466.
89. Innes, “‘Reform’”; compare also R. Williams, *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society*, 4th ed. (Glasgow, 1976; repr., London: Fontana Press, 1990), 262–264; as well as Minard, “La ‘réforme’”, 11–13.
90. Compare, for instance, Merriam Webster, [www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/reform](http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/reform).
91. Innes, “‘Reform’”, 82. Innes highlights that the English word is very suitable for concise word formations and slogans: “The new noun-form ‘reform’ [instead of ‘reformation’, G. Schl.] also lent itself to snappy coinages: ‘poor-law reform’, ‘prison reform’, ‘police reform’, ‘army reform’ . . . there had been earlier projects of institutional amendment in all these fields; yet it was in the 1780s that they came to be sloganised as ‘reforms’.” Ibid, 85–86.
92. Compare, for instance, E. Burke, “Speech on Economical Reform, 11 February 1780”, in *The Writings and Speeches of Edmund Burke*, ed. P. Langford (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), 3:481ff.
93. Compare among others N. McArthur, “Reform and Revolution”, 2013, 3:481.
94. “Lacking both the religious and the corrective – even punitive – associations of ‘reform’, ‘improvement’ won wide acceptance in the eighteenth century as the ultimately unthreatening word for ameliorative change.” Innes, “‘Reform’”, 77.
95. Bender, *Revolutionen*, 170–171.
96. L.-S. Mercier, *Néologie, ou Vocabulaire de mots nouveaux, à renouveler, ou pris dans des acceptations nouvelles* (Paris, 1803), XII.
97. See also French orthography: *Réforme* or *Reforme*, cited by Wolgast, “Reform, Reformation”, 339–341.

98. Ibid., 340.
99. The entries in Johann Heinrich Zedler's *Grosses vollständiges Universal-Lexicon*, vol. 30 (1741), vol. 47 (1746), vol. 30 (1741), are very informative: "Reformiren, Lat. *reformare*, Fr. *reformer*, bedeutet eigentlich ändern, erneuern, verbessern, in bessern Stand setzen, zurechte machen, wieder einrichten, ingleichen meistern, hofmeistern, Lt. *mutare*, *emendare*; ferner eine andere Religion einführen, die Leute zu einer andern Religion zwingen. . . , desgleichen ist es auch ein Kriegs-Wort, und heisset abdancken, unterstecken; Eine Compagnie, ein Regiment reformiren." J.H. Zedler, *Grosses vollständiges Universal-Lexicon aller Wissenschaften und Künste* (Halle; Leipzig, 1732–1754), 30:1694. The semantic richness of G. *reformi[e] ren* is manifest in G. *Reformation* and less manifest in G. *Reform*. Apart from the church-historical meaning, it is the military acception of G. *reformieren/Reformation* which is dominant, like in seventeenth century French. Somehow striking are the numerous and long entries for *verbesser\** in Zedler, *Grosses vollständiges Universal-Lexicon*, 47:140–160. Many different usages are given for G. *Verbesserung/verbessern*, several among them with a juridical, but not an explicitly political meaning, i.e. with reference to constitutional law. Remarkable is also the quite long article on *Verbesserung der Seele*, Lat. *emendatio animi*, which corresponds roughly to the reflexive use of *se réformer*. In Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm's *Deutsches Wörterbuch* the lemma *Reform*, usually accompanying *Reformation*, is missing, J. Grimm and W. Grimm, *Deutsches Wörterbuch* (Leipzig: Hirzel, 1854–1957).
100. Reinalter, "Reform und Revolution", 330; Wolgast, "Reform, Reformation", 345.
101. A.L. Schlözer, *Allgemeines Statsrecht und Statsverfassungslere: Voran: Einleitung in alle StatsWissenschaften, Encyklopädie derselben: Metapolitik* (1793; repr., Frankfurt am Main: Ferdinand Keip, 1970). Some pertinent expressions: "statsrechtliche ReformationsSchriftsteller", Ibid, VII; "Politische Kenntnisse haben angefangen, die alte WeltGeschichte, vorzüglich in den Begriffen von den Griechen, zu reformiren. Politische Kenntnisse sind das erprobteste Präservatif gegen Projettir- und Revolutionssucht." Ibid, 28. *Reform versus Revolution*, Ibid, 162, 164, 166–167. On Schlözer's contribution to the history of the word compare Wolgast, "Reform, Reformation", 343–344; on Schlözer's political philosophy see M. Scattola, *La nascita delle scienze dello stato: Ludwig Schlözer e il pensiero politico tedesco del Settecento* (Milano: Franco Angeli, 1994).
102. On Kant's notion of *reform* compare C. Langer, *Reform nach Prinzipien: Untersuchungen zur politischen Theorie Immanuel Kants* (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1986); Ch. Ferrié, *La politique de Kant: un réformisme révolutionnaire* (Paris: Payot, 2016); O. Scholz, "Reform/Revolution (moralisch)", in *Kant-Lexikon*, ed. M. Willaschek, et al. (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2015), 2:1919–1921; Ibid, 1921–1922.
103. I. Iselin, "Di una riforma d'Italia: Leggi d'Italia: In VillaFranca, \*1767, 364 Seiten, in klein 8", review of "Di una riforma d'Italia" by C.A. Pilati, *Allgemeine Deutsche Bibliothek* 6, no. 2 (1768): 142–162, 148.
104. "[W]ie Voltaire und seine Anhänger mit dem Ausdruck *révolution des esprits* immer wieder den baldigen Sieg der Aufklärung beschworen". Reichardt, "Die 'Revolution'", 887.
105. Copernic being referred to in a substantial way in the *Vorrede B*, the expression "Revolution der Denkart" seems to hint at the original cosmological meaning of *revolutio (orbium coelestium)*. Also to mention the expression *doctrinarum revolutiones* in Bacon's *Novum Organum*.

106. Genovesi remembers in 1760 in his *Mémoires/Memorie autobiografiche*: “mi bastava a fare una riforma a’ miei pensieri.” *Il Caffè* discusses a *riforma d’opinioni* and a *riforma nella generale opinione*. Quotations from P. Stoppelli, ed., *Biblioteca Italiana Zanichelli* (Bologna: Zanichelli, 2010).
107. To contextualise these particular cases of an international transfer of concepts via translations, compare Müller and Schmieder, *Begriffsgeschichte*, 801–819.
108. Compare the excellent survey A. Alimento, “Translation, Reception and Enlightened Reform: The Case of Forbonnais in Eighteenth-Century Political Economy”, *History of European Ideas* 40, no. 8 (2014): 1011–1025. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/01916599.2014.968332>.
109. F. Venturi, *Settecento riformatore* (Torino: Einaudi, 1976), 2:250–325.
110. S. Luzzi, “Der exportierte Antiklerikalismus: Europäische Stationen eines italienischen Reformprojekts im 18. Jahrhundert”, in *Italien in Europa: Die Zirkulation der Ideen im Zeitalter der Aufklärung*, ed. F. Jung and T. Kroll (München: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 2014), 161–184.
111. Stefano B. Galli, “La ‘Religione’ di Carl’Antonio Pilati”, in C.A. Pilati, *Di una riforma d’Italia ossia dei mezzi di riformare i più cattivi costumi e le più perniciose leggi d’Italia*, ed. S.B. Galli (Torino: Ananke, 2007), 9–179.
112. Pilati, *Di una riforma d’Italia*, 251: “intraprendere una nuova e totale riforma”. “Il motore della riforma di Pilati è la riforma stessa”, Venturi, *Settecento riformatore*, 2:276.
113. Compare the Isaak Iselin review, which is also instructive for the history of the concept. It seems quite characteristic that Iselin uses exclusively *Verbesserung* and *Verbesserer*.
114. Indication of the translator according to Luzzi, “Der exportierte Antiklerikalismus”.
115. Ibid.
116. According to Luzzi, the translator is unknown. Comp. Luzzi “Der exportierte Antiklerikalismus”. Interestingly there is a “preliminary report/preface” written by Pilati, in which he refers to both of the French translations (3–14). The Swiss catalogue (via KVK) indicates as place of publication Zurich and lists Salomon Gessner as “Bearbeiter” (without specifying his role). Gessner was a partner of the Zurich publishers Orell, Gessner, Füssli & Co.
117. Moses Mendelssohn’s *Jerusalem oder über religiöse Macht und Judentum* could not be taken into consideration here, since there seems to be no contemporary translation.
118. New critical and annotated study edition: C.W. Dohm, *Über die bürgerliche Verbesserung der Juden*, ed. W.C. Seifert (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2015). On Dohm see also R. Vierhaus, “Christian Wilhelm Dohm—Ein politischer Schriftsteller der deutschen Aufklärung”, in *Deutschland im 18. Jahrhundert: Politische Verfassung, Soziales Gefüge, Geistige Bewegungen: Ausgewählte Aufsätze von Rudolf Vierhaus*, ed. R. Vierhaus (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1987), 249–261.
119. Accessible online via <https://hdl.handle.net/2027/uc1.aa0001053933>.
120. On Abbé Grégoire: Jeremy D. Popkin and Richard H. Popkin, eds., *The Abbé Grégoire and His World* (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2000).

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## 2 The Dawning of the Age of Reform

### Epistemic and Semantic Shifts in Georgian Britain

*Sebastian Meurer*

#### Introduction

The *Age of Reform* is an analytical term with a colourful history. It originally centred on the years following the Great Reform Act of 1832 that drastically widened the political franchise and therefore marked an important stepping stone towards democratic Britain. The period identified by the term has since varied widely, but the tendency toward a much earlier starting point is clear: Recent usages tend to start the period as early as 1780 or even 1760, with the reform act rather marking its ending than its beginning. Moreover, following the eighteenth-century debates, the scope of reforms considered has much widened. Arthur Burns and Joanna Innes have highlighted the point that those first decades were characterized by reform as aspiration rather than by reforms actually achieved.<sup>1</sup> The predating of the “Age of Reform” thus follows the widening of historiographical interest from an institutional towards a cultural perspective on political history. By now, the concept in many regards resembles Reinhart Koselleck’s *Sattelzeit* pointing to an incubation period of modernity, during which all spheres of public life underwent critical scrutiny.

Notwithstanding the question, whether it should be set as the beginning of the Age of Reform, the year 1780 stands out, because it was at this very clear-cut point in time that *reform* suddenly became a central term of British public debate and political contestation. As Joanna Innes has made clear in her excellent conceptual history, the very word *reform* only superseded the previously more common *reformation* at this point, while shifting the focus from moral to institutional connotations. Innes sets great store by not conflating ideas and expressions and focuses on the latter. She also insists that of course melioration had been expressed before by a variety of words, e.g. improvement (positively connotated) or innovation (negatively connotated).<sup>2</sup>

To inquire into languages of reform, to my mind, means to go beyond a word-bound conceptual history by asking for the semantic structure of arguments for institutional change, and identifying typical correlations of assumptions, authorities etc. that exhibit a certain cohesiveness

and stability. The argumentative structure of what after 1780 would be called reform is, in fact, not easily determined. In this regard, an exploration informed by a heuristic search for languages of reform throughout the long eighteenth century will be helpful and therefore forms the aim of this chapter. How were *reform arguments* phrased before the word became common? Were older modes of argumentation superseded or even eliminated in the process? Did, for instance, the temporal perspectivization suddenly shift from the return to an idealized past to the building a better tomorrow? Which languages or discourses fed into the nascent reform debates? This genealogical perspective, commencing before the word reform was used in a modern meaning, is justified, not least because even though Britons may only have started arguing for a future-oriented reform of their political institutions as late as 1780, these very institutions, namely in government and financial administration, were undergoing constant change since the Glorious Revolution. Such a fundamental process can hardly have gone unnoticed in what was after all the most developed public sphere of Europe.<sup>3</sup>

## The Ancient Constitution in the Commercial Age

Melioration was certainly not a strange theme to the Age of Enlightenment, even on the Isles. Peculiarities of the *commercial* or, increasingly, *modern* age were widely discussed.<sup>4</sup> However, looking backwards in time in order to legitimize changes seems to have been rather the prevalent and enduring norm in Britain, particularly when it came to political institutions. Even when the anachronism of a given institution leaped to the eye, critics typically felt the need to ascertain that their critique did not challenge the established constitutional ideal.<sup>5</sup>

This reluctance, I argue, has to do with the persistency of the ancient constitution framework of historical thinking.<sup>6</sup> The revolutionaries of 1688/1689 had gone to great lengths to maintain that in fact no revolution had occurred. The post-1689 constitution was the legitimate continuation of the ancient British constitution, albeit cleansed of illegitimate *innovations* of the interregnum and restoration periods. The languages of politics and, indeed, law helped to keep up this fiction. James II was defined to have abdicated, but the Crown supposedly continued unbroken. According to legal opinion that was upheld throughout the eighteenth century, the monarch had not even forfeited any of his prerogatives, but merely – bindingly – agreed to partly cease exercising them.<sup>7</sup> As John Pocock put it, “Englishmen who took their stand on the principles of 1688 . . . clung to the habits of appealing to a supposedly actual English past not less and perhaps more than to abstract principles of government”.<sup>8</sup> In the following decades of radical constitutional and institutional changes, their very innovative character was rather rhetorically obscured than exposed.<sup>9</sup>

In the course of the revolution, there had been a contention between conservatives, who saw the constitution as essentially static, and more radical Whigs, who argued that it could and needed to be changed. In a way, the compromise that they finally achieved was to alter the constitution in fact but frame those changes within a very conservative narrative.<sup>10</sup> Unsurprisingly, the Whig Oligarchy who tightly kept the reins of government during the following decades generally perpetuated the static interpretation. However innovative their ministerial government in fact was, its legitimization rested on the footing of undisturbed continuity. It is more interesting to note that, apart from a small republican fringe, even opposition radicals rarely challenged this view. While they would fight the ministry on every step and demand far-reaching institutional changes, they usually did so by appeal to revolution principles and the past: In their view, the Glorious Revolution had not gone far enough in restoring the original and pure form of the constitution.<sup>11</sup>

## Old Corruption

There is a flipside to this rhetoric. If any argument for change needs to aim at the restauration of a supposed erstwhile ideal, then the present situation first must be presented as an aberration from that ideal. The emerging language of Old Corruption fulfilled that very function.

The institutional changes were not complete with the revolution settlement. One of the most profound innovations was certainly the cabinet headed by a first or prime minister. This was no legally defined office but rather a position that developed in practice during the Whig Supremacy and was afterwards continued and then taken for granted.<sup>12</sup> Robert Walpole (1676–1745) is generally considered the first prime minister. His long reign was characterized by stability and the introduction of new governing techniques designed to stabilize and substantiate ministerial rule. He kept a tight rein on the cabinet and also on his parliamentary majorities by means of a purposeful application of Crown patronage. Loyal members of parliament could expect to be rewarded with a lucrative office eventually. In institutional terms, the cabinet headed by the prime minister became the heart of the executive that was indistinguishable from the Crown at least as long as the monarch backed it. This development did not go unnoticed. In fact, it elicited sustained stinging criticism from opposition writers around Henry St. John, Viscount Bolingbroke (1678–1751), leading to the famous paper war between *country* and *court* that was waged in newly founded magazines in the 1720s and 1730s.<sup>13</sup>

The country attacks were first and foremost aimed against Robert Walpole. Bolingbroke and his circle accused the first minister not only of personal corruption but also of purposefully weaving a web of dependencies, corrupting others, and subverting the constitution. They operated with the idea of a more or less ideal core constitution that was vulnerable to

ministerial corruption, because the makers of the Glorious Revolution had failed to immunize it. The country party now claimed their right as guardians of the constitution and the alleged *revolution principles*. On the one hand, Bolingbroke drew on the languages of political theory and natural law to expound his constitutional understanding and classical Roman exempla. The application to practical politics, on the other hand, was very much personalized and moralizing in tone: The ideal and, in a way, timeless constitution was supposedly in danger of being subverted by evil men. While Bolingbroke fleshed out the principles of opposition and thereby earned his place as a pioneer of modern political theory, he firmly framed his “country” critique in ancient constitution thinking and seventeenth-century republican ideas. At their core was the Machiavellian understanding of corruption, i.e. constitutional deterioration that originated with the personal corruption of ministers who lacked virtue and therefore put their personal interest above the public good. Bolingbroke repeatedly used the noun *reformation* and the verb *reform* with regard to the state in its contemporary meaning: He always called for timely counteraction against tendencies of corruption or against concrete grievances respectively. Moreover, this opposition rhetoric had very strong moral connotations. He called on politicians to prove their own virtue by reforming the growing corruption of the state, proclaiming that course of action as the perpetual moral imperative of any member of parliament. His main example was the parliamentary failure to reform during the reign of Charles I that, in his view, had led to civil war and Cromwell’s tyranny:

If our grievances under King Charles the First had been redressed by a sober, regular, parliamentary reformation of the state; or, if the civil war happening, a new government had been established on principles of the constitution, not of faction, of liberty, not of licentiousness, as there was on the abdication of King James the Second.<sup>14</sup>

The vulnerability of the *original principles*<sup>15</sup> of the constitution thus partly stemmed from lack of virtue in the critical time of the Glorious Revolution, while the corrupt first minister represented the present threat.<sup>16</sup>

The court party, however, not only defended Walpole’s policies but also viciously attacked the foundations of country arguments. This is especially true for William Arnall (died 1736), the most prolific writer of this ministry-commissioned group.<sup>17</sup> Arnall dismantled the historical country argumentation by historicizing exemplary precedents and generally by affirming historical change. The present, commercial age needed suitable measures; laws and policies needed to be changed, adapted or substituted in order to keep working:

IT unavoidable happens, in a Succession of Ages, from the Change of National Manners and Customs, from the Influence of Parties,

from the Variation of publick Opinions, from Revolutions in Government, from great Alterations in Commerce and Property, as well as from numberless other Causes, that Laws themselves will change; some grow obsolete and unregarded, others differently understood, or construed to a new and contrary Meaning.<sup>18</sup>

Arnall did not tire to highlight the great accomplishments of Walpole's ministry, foremost stability, commercial growth, and the maintenance of political liberty. Emphasizing the pragmatic side of politics, he painted the country opposition as "malecontents", whose moralizing critiques pointed in a dangerous direction. In that light, he rejected reformation:

Some publick Corruptions there are of that strength and prevalence, that, however shameful and pernicious they may be, they must yet be suffer'd to remain; lest by rooting them out, (if that be possible, as it often is not) greater Evils be introduc'd. Such frequently is the Situation of Things, and such the Malignity of Men, that Measures strictly virtuous would bring present Confusion and Ruin; and where an endeavour to reform would overturn, Reformation is a Calamity.<sup>19</sup>

He did not deny the existence of corruption. As constitutional change appeared not as perilous aberration but as the historical norm, Arnall questioned the asserted connection between corruption and constitutional decay. Rather, corruption was part of the human condition, a human trait that had to be acknowledged and accordingly managed through responsible government. In a controversial piece that appeared in 1733, he went as far as to suggest that its effects could actually be beneficial, if handled well:

IT ever was my Opinion, that Corruption is good or bad in its Effects, as good and bad Governours apply it; and certainly, it takes its Nature from Them. If they well direct it, nor use it for any Purpose but the publick Advantage, they merit immortal Applause.<sup>20</sup>

The passage echoes Bernard Mandeville's economic argument from the fable of the bees without mentioning the controversial author: In a commercial age, private corruption, if handled well, might just lead to public benefit.<sup>21</sup> This was not the official government line, nor was it in itself a fully fledged embrace of a modern constitutional state that legislators could modify at will. However, it was a defence of the (equally constructed) factual against universalist ideals, praise of the present over an idealized past.

Arnall's utilitarian dismissal did little to quench the potency of arguments based on corruption. On the contrary, the outlines of the Old Corruption theme as laid out by country authors were arguably the most

enduring legacy of the paper war. The idea that a group of corrupt politicians used Crown resources not only to enrich themselves but also to subvert the constitution, remained part of radical and generally of opposition rhetoric.<sup>22</sup> On his accession in 1760, George III announced that he would take a more active political stance than his predecessors had. In conjunction with the American crisis, this statement elicited continuous opposition, which fuelled the general instability and political polarization of the 1760s. In 1770, Edmund Burke (1729–1797), as strategical mastermind of the Whigs around the Marquess of Rockingham (1730–1782), made the Old Corruption theme the centrepiece of his *Thoughts on the Cause of the Present Discontents* that was to serve as a sort of manifesto to their emerging party: “The power of the Crown, almost dead and rotten as Prerogative, has grown up anew, with much more strength, and far less odium, under the name of Influence.”<sup>23</sup> In his writing, Burke turned the notion of the corrupt influence of the Crown into a veritable conspiracy theory. According to Burke, an unnamed shadow cabinet – a cabal of invisible advisors – was pulling strings by means of Crown patronage. It was never quite clear, whether the king himself, the ministry, or this unnamed cabal was to be blamed for an asserted general decay of the constitution.<sup>24</sup>

### **The Pivotal Moment: The Oeconomical Reform Debates of 1779–c. 1783**

The initial stimulus for oeconomical reform<sup>25</sup> originated with the extra-parliamentary Yorkshire Association Movement. This short-term alliance of dissatisfied country gentry and urban radicals under the leadership of the energetic reverend Christopher Wyvill (1740–1822) coordinated an onslaught of more than 40 identical petitions from all parts of England and Wales that reached parliament during the winter of 1779/1780. They acted from the general feeling of crisis that was foremost economic. Over decades of almost constant warfare, taxation and the national debt had skyrocketed. The immense success in war finance made possible by the Financial Revolution that historians praise as the foundation for Britain’s rise to power was suspicious to contemporaries, who feared that the state could break down at any moment under the weight of the debt. Moreover, the petitioners took up the key notion of Old Corruption. In the petition, they implied that a small political elite was filling their pockets and undermined political liberty in the process. The petition then demanded that no more taxes be levied until the state had been cleansed of corruption and mismanagement:

Your Petitioners . . . do most earnestly request, That, before any new Burthens are laid upon this Country, effectual Measures may be taken by this House, to enquire into and correct, the gross Abuses

in the Expenditure of Public Money, to reduce all exorbitant Emoluments, to recind and abolish all sinecure Places and unmerited Pensions, and to appropriate the Produce of Necessities of the State, in such a Manner as to the Wisdom of Parliament shall seem meet.<sup>26</sup>

In the course of the open meeting, in which the nascent Association Movement sanctioned the petition-text, Wyvill also installed a committee,

to carry on the necessary correspondence for effectually promoting the object of the petition, and to . . . support that laudable reform, and such other measures as may conduce to restore the Freedom of Parliament.<sup>27</sup>

By itself, this call for *laudable reform* was still framed in a relatively conventional way – reforming towards a past ideal. However, while the moral Old Corruption rhetoric was included, the objects of reform became institutional: administrative reforms in order to relieve the national debt and thereby the taxpayers. As it turned out, this critique would develop momentum – not least because it introduced (seemingly) clear issues for institutional action aiming at fiscal savings. This is somewhat ironic, because the administrative angle was rather a rhetorical device than the actual goal of the Association Movement that ultimately aimed at parliamentary reform.<sup>28</sup> Wyvill's own objectives were relatively moderate. He pushed for a loosening of taxes, financial consolidation, and moderate parliamentary reform, i.e. shorter legislative sessions and a certain overhaul of the political franchise. Other circles within the movement were more radical: They dreamt of building an entirely new civil association bottom up that would replace parliament.<sup>29</sup>

The Yorkshire Association Movement was relatively short-lived – the various local associations never really came together and after two years, the whole thing came apart. This may, at least partly have been the case, because the opposition within parliament took up the issues in order to bring down the long-running ministry of Lord North (1732–1792). Before the petitions even officially reached parliament, the Earl of Shelburne (1737–1805) called for a committee on state finances in the House of Lords. However, it was Edmund Burke's speech on *oeconomical reform* in the Commons that had the most impact, though not quite the way he himself had hoped for. In the rhetorically brilliant speech, Burke polemically singled out the most archaic and seemingly absurd institutions, especially those connected to the Royal Household and the king's civil list. His aim was to co-opt the extra-parliamentary impact for the ideological pet subject of the Rockingham Whigs, i.e. the “corrupt influence of the crown”. Thus, his proposals rather aimed at curbing that supposed influence than at financial savings. As a means to that end, he did call for an overall *oeconomical reform* by principle and that expression stuck.<sup>30</sup>

The Oeconomical Reform Debates that raged in and out of parliament for the next years belong to the fiercest political contestations of the eighteenth century. At first, the ministry was taken aback and the opposition could score major points by passing John Dunning's (1731–1783) famous motion “that the influence of the crown has increased, is increasing, and ought to be diminished.”<sup>31</sup> However, North regained his momentum by hijacking Shelburne's committee idea by calling for an expert commission on the state of the public accounts and endowing them with far-reaching competencies.<sup>32</sup> In the short run, this bought time for the government, though it did fall in 1782 over the war-deciding defeat at Yorktown. More importantly, all political manoeuvring aside, it marks the beginning of a reification of reform issues; subsequently these Commissioners for Examining the Public Accounts and other commissions that followed provided a much clearer picture of the workings and institutional structure of the British state.<sup>33</sup>

Both on a political and on a semantic level, the effects of the Oeconomical Reform Debates were profound, though rather on a long than a short term. These debates set the boundaries that would frame reform arguments for the next several decades. The switch is quite impressive on the semantic level. Until mid-1779, *reformation* was not a particularly prominent word, and its meaning was almost exclusively past-bound and mostly still restricted to religious or moral themes. While it could be used to indicate institutional melioration, this always implied remedying particular defects to reinstitute a better original state. Now, reform quickly took on its new meaning of future-bound and active institutional change for the better.<sup>34</sup> The fierce debates tied the three general issues under discussion closely together. From now on until deep into the nineteenth century, *oeconomical reform*, or simply *reform*, referred to parliamentary reform, administrative reform, and the consolidation of state finances. The debates also initiated a significant process of reification of these issues: While corruption remained an effective yet vague accusation that relied on a general feeling of wrong and was therefore hard to disprove, reform discussions increasingly treated identifiable problems. As public reforms were tied to the question of state finances, their accomplishments carried the promise of auditability: At least in the midterm, it was assumed, reforms would lead to considerable savings.<sup>35</sup>

One more peculiarity of the Oeconomical Reform Debates needs stressing: Even though the debates were heated and almost every single issue contested, no one disputed the necessity or meaningfulness of reform as such. Rather, while it was far from clear at first what exactly it entailed, *reform* in its new usage consistently conveyed positive connotations. It had become the antonym to corruption, the potential remedy for the general sense of crisis. In that regard, it even retained some of its former moral property: Reform was set as a moral obligation to the public good. Finally, it is interesting to note that even though the oeconomical reform

debates massively impacted political debate and profoundly restructured argumentative patterns with regard to the state, this was not because some clearly demarcated interest group enforced their reform ideas. In fact, at least in the political arena, no group or party was really all that interested in reform, certainly not in all three issues. All groups involved were rather trying to use the oeconomical reform momentum to push their various short-term agendas.<sup>36</sup>

## Political Oeconomy Applied

In the wake of the Oeconomical Reform Debates, the language of reform was drastically refined through the evolving practice of reform. Important directions for reform processes of the following decades were set by the pioneering Commissioners for Examining the Public Accounts (1780–1787). Lord North had instituted this expert commission in the course of the Oeconomical Reform Debates, mostly to appear as an active political leader tackling the – now obvious – problems of the state apparatus. To him, this thrust at reification on the one hand served to invalidate the allegations of corruption and, on the other hand, bought him time. The expert commission resulting from that political maneuver was, however, special in a number of ways. Firstly, they received far-reaching powers to audit books and to question any officer under oath – a combination that no other state agency could muster. Furthermore, and almost unprecedented, they were not only to lay bare defects in the handling of public money, but they were also expressively charged in their appointment to develop suggestions, “in what more expeditious and effectual, and less expensive, Manner, the said Services can in future be regulated and carried on, for the Benefit of the Publick.”<sup>37</sup> Finally, because the political situation of their appointment was so volatile, its members needed to be politically neutral or above criticism. The resulting pick was a group of seven experienced men with legal, military, and mercantile backgrounds, who were generally rather competent than prominent.<sup>38</sup> In the seven years the commission was active, they produced 15 reports filling more than 1,000 pages in the Journals of the House of Commons in which they mapped large parts of British public administration and laid bare its faults. From the very beginning, the Commissioners set to their task in a consciously methodical, even scientific, manner. While there was no tradition like the continental *Staatswissenschaft* to draw on, they could and did instead turn to another new discipline, which had begun to develop a new functional perspective on the state since the middle of the century: Scottish political oeconomy.<sup>39</sup>

David Hume (1711–1776) had famously commented on the question of ministerial influence in 1742 by dismissing the notion of corruption. In his institutional analysis, Crown influence rather seemed like a necessary check on an otherwise overwhelming parliament.<sup>40</sup> This could, at the

time, be read as just another court opinion, defending Walpole's politics. Similarly to Arnall, Hume had de-moralized the issue. In his reasoning, Walpole's actions appeared in terms of institutions that could be analyzed in light of their constitutional function. In the early 1740s, Hume's analysis still followed classical constitutional questions of stability, political liberty, and the balance of power. Hume and other Scottish savants did break new ground when they started applying empirical scientific reasoning to the organization of state and society. The origins of this switch may lie in the famous rich country–poor country debate starting in 1752. What exactly were the reasons why some countries were rich, while others stayed poor? Was it possible to identify the deciding factors in order to further the public good?<sup>41</sup> The state was thereby opened up to new analytical lenses: Instead of the conventional – i.e. constitutional – set of questions regarding stability, power, and balance, these theorists now asked, which sort of system was ideal in a given context in order to result in the best possible outcome for society as a whole? They asked for concrete measures for social improvement instead of only philosophizing abstractly on progress. For eighteenth-century political oeconomy, David Hume's programmatic essay *Of Commerce* (1752) marks a pivotal point, because he consciously applied his science of man on economic subjects. In a way, he only created economics as a subject area by this operation, as he described systematic interrelationships between formerly discrete topics. Confidently, he lectured on the epistemological power of general principles (i.e. a theory-based approach) and then addressed a critical readership in the following manner:

I thought this introduction necessary before the following discourses on commerce, money, interest, balance of trade, &c. where, perhaps, there will occur some principles which are uncommon, and which may seem too refined and subtile [sic] for such vulgar subjects. If false, let them be rejected: But no one ought to entertain a prejudice against them, merely because they are out of the common road.<sup>42</sup>

Hume thus opened up the economic field for theoretical reasoning, but he never delivered a comprehensive account on political oeconomy himself. This was left to other exponents of the Scottish Enlightenment, namely James Steuart (1707–1780) and Adam Smith (1723–1790), who, in this sense, share more than is commonly admitted. Both developed comprehensive studies on political oeconomy from a governance perspective – the view of the statesman or legislator. This idealized figure of the enlightened politician will study the given situation and contexts and judge different plans in order to assert the best possible plan of action for the public good.<sup>43</sup> Though they differ markedly in answers, both works are treatises developing a social science for oeconomic subjects.<sup>44</sup> Hume and many writers following in his wake saw human nature

as a constant, but human behaviour to a great degree dependant on those very social and institutional contexts. Such contexts changed through time, and they varied between different nations. For James Steuart, who based his *Principles of Political Oeconomy* on a comparison of different European countries, these contexts were even constitutive for political oeconomy as such:

The great art therefore of political oeconomy is, first to adapt the different operations of it to the spirit, manners, habits, and customs of the people; and afterwards to model these circumstances so, as to be able to introduce a set of new and more useful institutions.<sup>45</sup>

Based on a sound empirical analysis, it did seem possible to develop improved institutions. Custom, ancient usage, or origin were transformed from a normative primal ground into mere signifiers of empirical contexts that needed to be taken into account. Usefulness for the public good became the sole normative yardstick.<sup>46</sup>

The Commissioners for Examining the Public Accounts began to survey the state from this very perspective. They applied empirical methods to the workings of the financial administration, which had hitherto not constituted a coherent subject area either. They meticulously audited books, questioned officers, and traced administrative procedures to their original purpose. Comparing their findings, they sought to identify best practices and to abstract general principles in order to transfer those to similar cases. In the end, their reform proposals added up to a systematic reform of the state apparatus: the introduction of “a System of General Oeconomy”.<sup>47</sup> In their systematic view, customary usage or ancient origin had little weight. The overall administrative system to them looked defective and in urgent need for reform. More to the point, the *reformist* change of perspective resulted in very different perceptions and claimed validity for far-reaching changes. All the while, they had little interest in corruption in the sense of a personal lack of virtue. In their view, the question was not who was to blame, but where the system was open to abuse and how that could be fixed. All offices, which had before been framed as royal grants comparable to nobility titles, now needed to be justified exclusively by the task it performed for the state and, indirectly, for the public good. These tasks in turn depended on the historically changeable public needs and contexts. Offices or whole departments, whose purpose had ceased to exist, needed to be abolished. When the Commissioners discovered an anachronistic institution, they meticulously explained the contexts of its formation as well as the historical changes now necessitating reform. A good example is their assessment of the Exchequer:

[The Exchequer is] an Office of the highest Antiquity, that has subsisted for Ages under its present Form; that has the Receipt and Custody of the Public Treasure . . . ; an Office of such a Description

is entitled to the utmost Respect, and Alterations in its Establishment should be well weighed, and proposed with caution and Diffidence: But, as Change in the Manners, Customs, and, above all, in the Finances of this Nation, since the Origin of this Office, together with peculiar Circumstances of the Times, may render Regulations necessary, we have judged it a Part of our Duty to examine into the Receipt of the Exchequer, with a View to an oeconomical Reform.<sup>48</sup>

Oeconomical reform at the very least meant to bring institutions up to present needs – the very opposite of ancient constitution reasoning.

The Commissioners came to envision a general overhaul of the whole administration. At the same time, their reports exhibit an understanding that reform could not be achieved through a simple legislative act. It had quickly become clear to them that reform needed to be conceptualized as a process of active implementation.

In a Revenue that embraces such a Variety, it is hardly possible to introduce, at once, Regulation coextensive with the Objects. It must be a Work of Time. A practicable System must be formed upon Principle, and carried by Steps and Degrees into Execution.<sup>49</sup>

In fact, the coming processes of implementation proved to be even more complicated and much less controlled than the Commissioners had anticipated. The actual reforms, when attempted at all, rather followed a piece-meal pattern than their envisioned systematic process. However, their procedural ideas and characteristic semantic framing left their marks in the internal papers, which these processes generated. The language used within the offices was quickly marked by *administrative oeconomy*, even though individual measures often met with entrenched resistance. Even after the original Commissioners had been dissolved, the offices were subjected to countless inquiries which, over the coming decades, covered an ever-wider field. These inquiries not only took up the characteristic language but also invariably adopted and at times refined the empirical methods of the Commissioners and added to the available, now often quantifiable, information on the state.<sup>50</sup> Given the comparability of the results and the continued perception of looming economic crisis, it became increasingly hard to defend customary usage that did not fit the oeconomical ideal. While this inner-administrative language did not directly cross into the printed discourse, public pressure for reforms in general remained high. Any sort of public institution suddenly seemed in need of reform.<sup>51</sup>

## Polarization and Politization of Reform

Still, the public discourse at first retained many characteristics of the language of Old Corruption. Even though opposition assumptions of the extent of “corrupt influence” had been massively relativized by the

inquiries, the theme remained the opposition mantra.<sup>52</sup> As it became clear that systematic administrative reforms were difficult in practice, politically dangerous as they antagonized influential personages by threatening their resources, and even expensive in the short run, the political will to carry concrete measures waned.<sup>53</sup> At the same time, even though reform was not necessarily pushed, it retained its mostly unchallenged positive connotation as antidote to corruption.

That this evaluation radically changed once more was due to the persistently close discursive association of the original package of issues – administrative reform, financial consolidation, and parliamentary reform – even though they were tackled in varying degrees and by different groups. Financial and administrative reform seemed at least to be addressed – by measures like Pitt's sinking fund on the one hand and by the administrative reform inquiries on the other (no matter how little their recommendations were actually followed through).<sup>54</sup>

Matters stood differently with parliamentary reform. In the early 1780s, it had looked as if a moderate parliamentary reform was in reach. In 1785, William Pitt the Younger (1759–1806) introduced a bill for a moderate widening of the franchise. The bill was crushed and thereafter Pitt buried the issue himself.<sup>55</sup> Moreover, in the aftermath of the French Revolution, conservative reaction was massive. Political societies like John Cartwright's Society for Constitutional Information, which had become used to openly agitating for parliamentary reform, suddenly found themselves on the defensive. There was widespread fear of "English Jacobins" planning a revolution on British soil, and successive ministries took measures against political activists. Even though the number of radicals convicted in court remained minuscule in the 1790s, the fear of persecution was justified: Ministries increased the pressure, and persecution was real notwithstanding later acquittal in court. In the first decades of the nineteenth century, the emerging labour movement reinvigorated radical agitation. The Corn Laws, protectionist policies to support British agricultural production in the post-war depression, served to politicize the labouring poor. In the years leading to the Great Reform Act, at the latest with the Peterloo massacre of 1819 – the violent dispersal of a mass demonstration in Manchester – the political climate was thoroughly polarized. Reform became the battle call for parliamentary reform, for a remodelling of the political system along increasingly democratic ideas. Those arguing for reform did again take up Old Corruption, i.e. parliamentary reform against the corrupt political elite, albeit without any illusions about an erstwhile ideal constitution.<sup>56</sup> Henry Hunt (1773–1835), the imprisoned champion of the reform movement, and his followers<sup>57</sup> often agitated against Whitehall as *headquarters of corruption*<sup>58</sup> or *dunghill of corruption*,<sup>59</sup>

styled reform as fighting a *system of corruption*<sup>60</sup> and pushed for major democratization:

I am persuaded that nothing short of a Radical Reform will overthrow the power of corruption – nothing short of a full and equal representation of the people, can stay the hand of tyranny, or break the yoke of oppression; and this, I contend, will do it, and it is all that we, as Reformers, have at present to do with.<sup>61</sup>

The reaction of the governing High Tories was, in a nutshell, to crush reformers by means of the Six Acts<sup>62</sup> and invariably demonize reformist ideas as mostly synonymous with *revolution*. *Reform* became an extremely contentious signifier.<sup>63</sup>

By the time, government and state administration consisted of officers who had been professionally socialized in a perceived process of reform. The language of oeconomical reform that had emerged since the 1780s now dropped or qualified its central term, but lived on. There is a telling passage written by a leading proponent of the first generation of career bureaucrats<sup>64</sup> in the 1830s that perfectly encapsulates this shift:

RATIONAL REFORM, or, to speak in more correct, because in more appropriate language, an amendment, or abolition of existing abuses or usages unwholesome in form or in practice – which might or might not have been such in their origin – which commenced in distant ages, have grown up by length of time, and are now become inconvenient and therefore inexpedient excrescences, which, not having kept pace with the gradual improvement in our system of jurisprudence or of civil government, have become unsuited to the altered manners, the customs, and the feelings of the times in which we live – this species of rational reform, and revolution in all its naked deformity, are as widely separate and different from each other as the blaze of light differs from sable and impenetrable darkness. Under the specious name of REFORM, and the pretext of advocating that which is legitimate, REVOLUTION is obviously cloaked, but artfully concealed. Under this specious pretext, but manifest delusion, the unwary and the innocent promoter of the legitimate object of RATIONAL REFORM, abolition, or amendment, is drawn in to afford his countenance and support to the guilty project of revolution.<sup>65</sup>

Established High Tory officers like Harrison fully carried the uncompromising government line against parliamentary reform, while defending and keeping up what had become an essential perspective on the state as *rational reform*: namely, the understanding that the state in principle

needed to be constantly reformed in order to stay in tune with historical change; and the conviction that this process amounted to a gradual and potentially indefinite improvement.

## Conclusion

The present cursory tour de force through the long eighteenth century can be read in light of the interplay of various political languages. In the period investigated, the legacy of the Glorious Revolution continued to have an important influence on arguments with regard to the state. It cemented ancient constitutionalism as a default language for addressing the state – as constitution or with regard to its institutions. Ancient constitutionalism can certainly be understood as a political language, but hardly as a language of reform. Given the strong sense of patriotic constitutional pride, it was certainly biased towards stability and affirmation of the status quo.<sup>66</sup> Under the terms of a dominant language of ancient constitutionalism, institutional change needed to be phrased as the return to an erstwhile ideal. The emerging language of Old Corruption provided a lever in that regard and may, with certain reservations, qualify as a language of reform. It allowed to voice unease with the status quo and even formulate the urgent need for action without breaking the boundaries of patriotic praise of the constitution. Inaction would lead to despotism. Old corruption carried many classical republican notions into the eighteenth and even nineteenth centuries, especially the perspective on the state as a body of persons as well as the emphasis on civic virtue and its connection to constitutional decay. Its legitimatory source was moral, its models in the past – the negative deterrent of the seventeenth-century constitutional catastrophes or the fall of Rome counting even more than the hypothetical ideal past. In context with Old Corruption, the older form and meaning of *reformation* as return to moral purity occasionally shone up, without constituting a central term.

The Oeconomical Reform Debates of the early 1780s indeed constitute a turning point. While *reform* entered the spotlight unchallenged because it was perceived as the antonym of corruption, *oeconomical reform* carried the seeds of a deep restructuring of arguments. By applying methods and objectives taken from political oeconomy to the perceived current crisis of the state, the countless inquiries formed a new reform language. Oeconomical reform perceived of the state as a system of interconnected institutions, in which persons only fulfilled necessary functions that needed to be justified by the public good. The past had a bearing on the present but was devalued as a model, because history was set as a process of constant change that necessitated institutions to change with it or fail. Moreover, the legitimatory source became scientific and the goal economic: a more rational allocation of resources than ever before. Thus, the ideal model was again a hypothetical: a projection

of what the application of rational principles to changing circumstances could achieve in the future. This language originated with functionaries and successively took hold of the public discourse without, however, eliminating Old Corruption.

Finally, the close links forged between parliamentary, administrative, and financial reform had a bearing on the way languages interacted. The perceived progress in financial consolidation and administrative reform led to a temporary receding of allegations of corruption and demands for parliamentary reform in the 1790s. Reversely, the renewed surge of parliamentary reform demands and the polarization of the discourse in the early nineteenth century was accompanied by a politicization and even dismissal of the central term. Even bereft of its central signifier, the language of oeconomical reform, however, had become firmly established and continued to frame the perceptions of a state that needed to be continually improved from within.

## Notes

1. A. Burns and J. Innes, eds., *Rethinking the Age of Reform: Britain 1780–1850* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 1.
2. J. Innes, “‘Reform’ in English Public Life: The Fortunes of a Word”, in *Rethinking the Age of Reform*, ed. A. Burns and J. Innes (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 71–97. Also see P. Slack, *From Reformation to Improvement: Public Welfare in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1999).
3. This chapter heavily draws on my Ph.D. thesis, in which I offer an intellectual history of administrative ideation and semantic battles accompanying reform efforts in the second half of the eighteenth century. S. Meurer, *A System of Oeconomy: Approaches to Public Administration in Britain and British India at the Beginning of the Age of Reform* (Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Universität Heidelberg, 2014).
4. Slack, *From Reformation to Improvement*.
5. There is, for instance, an anonymous tract from 1702 examining the electoral system in order to argue a stronger representation for London that is quite revealing. The author lays bare the massive imbalance in terms of representation by an elaborate twofold calculation with regard to property and taxes. However, half the pamphlet is dedicated to proving that a widening of the franchise has been common practice over the centuries and moreover “does noways interfere with the essentials of our constitution.” A Gentleman, “The Representative of London and Westminster in Parliament, Examined and Considered [ . . . ]. (1702)”, in *A Collection of Scarce and Valuable Tracts, on the Most Interesting and Entertaining Subjects, But Chiefly such as Relate to the History and Constitution of These Kingdoms [ . . . ]: Selected from an Infinite Number in Print and Manuscript, in . . . Public as well as Private Libraries, Particularly that of the Late Lord Somers*, ed. W. Scott, 2nd ed. (London, 1814), 403.
6. J.G.A. Pocock, *The Ancient Constitution and the Feudal Law: A Study of English Historical Thought in the 17th Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1957).
7. See especially William Blackstone’s first academic characterization of the constitution and the legal system. W. Blackstone, *Commentaries on the Laws of England*, Vol. I (Oxford, 1765).

8. Pocock, *The Ancient Constitution*, 231.
9. J.G.A. Pocock, “Modes of Political and Historical Time in Early-Eighteenth-Century England”, in *Virtue, Commerce, and History: Essays on Political Thought and History, Chiefly in the Eighteenth Century*, ed. J.G.A. Pocock (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 91–102.
10. M. Goldie, “The Roots of True Whiggism 1688–94”, *History of Political Thought* 1, no. 2 (1980): 210–212.
11. J.G.A. Pocock, “The Varieties of Whiggism from Exclusion to Reform: A History of Ideology and Discourse”, in *Virtue, Commerce, and History: Essays on Political Thought and History, Chiefly in the Eighteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 215–246.
12. P. Jupp, *The Governing of Britain, 1688–1848: The Executive, Parliament and the People* (London: Routledge, 2006), 18–26.
13. P. Woodfine, “Tempters or Tempted? The Rhetoric and Practice of Corruption in Walpolean Politics”, in *Corrupt Histories*, ed. E. Kreike and W.C. Jordan (Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 2004), 167–198; I. Kramnick, *Bolingbroke and His Circle: The Politics of Nostalgia in the Age of Walpole* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1992).
14. H.St.J.V. Bolingbroke, *A Dissertation Upon Parties. In Several Letters to the Right Honourable Caleb D'Anvers* (London, 1735), letter II.
15. Bolingbroke frequently uses this expression. See e.g. *Ibid.*, letter XIII.
16. Q. Skinner, “The Principles and Practice of Opposition: The Case of Bolingbroke Versus Walpole”, in *Historical Perspectives: Studies in English Thought and Society, in Honour of J.H. Plumb*, ed. N. McKendrick (London: Europa, 1974), 93–128; E. Hellmuth, “‘The Power of Money Is Real Power’: Zur Debatte um Corruption in Großbritannien in der Ära Walpole”, in *Integration – Legitimation – Korruption: Politische Patronage in Früher Neuzeit und Moderne*, ed. R.G. Asch, B. Emich, and J.I. Engels (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2011), 247–266.
17. T. Horne, “Politics in a Corrupt Society: William Arnall’s Defense of Robert Walpole”, *Journal of the History of Ideas* 41, no. 4 (1980): 601–614.
18. W. Arnall [as Francis Walsingham], *Free Briton* 142 (London, 1732). Here as in other places, Arnall quite consciously echoed James Harrington’s maxim “power follows property”, thereby partly framing his modernist views in a republican language.
19. W. Arnall, *Clodius and Cicero: With Other Examples and Reasonings, in Defence of Just Measures Against Faction and Obloquy, Suited to the Present Conjunction* (London: Printed for J. Peele, at Locke’s Head in Paternoster-Row, 1726), 26.
20. W. Arnall [as Francis Walsingham], *Free Briton* 188 (London, 1733).
21. T. Horne, “Politics in a Corrupt Society: William Arnall’s Defense of Robert Walpole”, *Journal of the History of Ideas* 41, no. 4 (1980): 601–614.
22. H.T. Dickinson, *Liberty and Property: Political Ideology in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1977), 163–192.
23. E. Burke, “Thoughts on the Present Discontents”, in *The Writings and Speeches of Edmund Burke*, ed. P. Langford (1770; repr., Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981), 2: 241–323.
24. I.R. Christie, “Myth and Reality in Late-Eighteenth-Century British Politics”, in *Myth and Reality in Late-Eighteenth-Century British Politics and Other Paper*, ed. I.R. Christie (London: Macmillan, 1970), 27–54; J. Brewer, *Party Ideology and Popular Politics at the Accession of George III* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976).
25. Following Margaret Schabas and Keith Tribe, I use the eighteenth-century spelling *oeconomical* to discern the historical, wider meaning that was,

- moreover, changing in the very period, from strictly *economic*, i.e. financial issues in the modern sense. Cf. M. Schabas and N. de Marchi, eds., *Oeconomies in the Age of Newton* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003), 3.
26. C. Wyvill, *Political Papers Chiefly Respecting the Attempt of the County of York and Other Considerable Districts, Commenced in 1779, and Continued During Several Subsequent Years, to Effect a Reformation of the Parliament of Great-Britain* (York, 1794), 1: 8.
  27. *Ibid*, 4–5.
  28. H. Butterfield “The Yorkshire Association and the Crisis of 1779–80”, *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society: Fourth Series* 29 (1947): 69–91.
  29. I.R. Christie, “The Yorkshire Association, 1780–4: A study in Political Organisation”, *Historical Journal* 3, no. 2 (1960): 144–161; I.R. Christie, *Wilkes, Wyvill and Reform: The Parliamentary Reform Movement in British Politics 1760–1785* (New York, NY: St Martin’s Press, 1962).
  30. E. Burke, “Speech on Economical Reform: 11 February 1780”, in *Party, Parliament, and the American War*, ed. W.M. Elofson and A. Woods (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), 481–551; I.R. Christie, “Economical Reform and ‘The Influence of the Crown’, 1780”, in *Myth and Reality in Late-Eighteenth-Century British Politics and Other Papers*, ed. I.R. Christie (London: Macmillan, 1970), 296–310.
  31. Cobbett’s *Parliamentary History of England* (London, 1814), 21: col. 347.
  32. J. Torrance, “Social Class and Bureaucratic Innovation: The Commissioners for Examining the Public Accounts 1780–1787”, *Past and Present* 78 (1978): 56–81. The substantial role of this commission with regard to reform semantics is treated in the next section.
  33. J.R. Breihan, “William Pitt and the Commission on Fees, 1785–1801”, *Historical Journal* 27, no. 1 (1984): 59–81.
  34. J. Innes, “‘Reform’ in English Public Life: The Fortunes of a Word”, in *Rethinking the Age of Reform: Britain 1780–1850*, ed. A. Burns and J. Innes (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 71–97.
  35. Cf. P. Harling, *The Waning of ‘Old Corruption’: The Politics of Economical Reform in Britain, 1779–1846* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), 31–42.
  36. All historiographical attempts of attributing reform to a clear cut interest group, especially in a longer time-frame, have proven inadequate: This applies as much to Marxist appropriations of a rising proto-working class or bourgeoisie as it does to Franco Venturi’s “reform movement”, in which he combines anti-Catholic Gordon rioters along with radicals pushing for administrative reform as well as Whigs pushing for the ministry. F. Venturi, *The End of the Old Regime in Europe, 1768–1776* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1991), 1: 165–190.
  37. 20 Geo III, cap. 54: *Statutes at Large* (London, 1786), 9: 114.
  38. The only exception was the former governor-in-chief of Quebec, Sir Guy Carleton (1724–1808), who rather acted as a figurehead and left the commission after two years in order to organise the ordered retreat from America. His successor and apparently the leading voice was the equity layer Thomas Anguish (died 1785), formerly master and accountant general at the Court of Chancery. Among the mercantile members were two former directors of the Bank of England. See J. Torrance, “Social Class and Bureaucratic Innovation: The Commissioners for Examining the Public Accounts 1780–1787”, *Past and Present* 78 (1978): 56–81.
  39. I have treated the Commissioners thoroughly in my Ph.D. thesis. S. Meurer, *A System of Oeconomy: Approaches to Public Administration in Britain and British India at the Beginning of the Age of Reform* (Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Heidelberg, 2014), 101–146.

40. “[T]he interest of the body is here restrained by that of the individuals, . . . the House of Commons stretches not its power, because such an usurpation would be contrary to the interest of the majority of its members. The crown has so many offices at its disposal, that, when assisted by the honest and disinterested part of the house, it will always command the resolutions of the whole, so far, at least, as to preserve the ancient constitution from danger. We may, therefore, give to this influence what name we please, we may call it by the invidious appellations of corruption and dependence; but some degree and some kind of it are inseparable from the very nature of the constitution, and necessary to the preservation of our mixed government.” D. Hume, “On the Independency of Parliament”, in *Essays, Moral, Political, and Literary*, ed. E.F. Miller, 2nd ed. (Indianapolis, IN: Liberty Classics, 1987), 45.
41. For the rich country–poor country debate, see I. Hont, “The ‘Rich Country–Poor Country’ Debate in Scottish Classical Political Economy”, in *Wealth and Virtue: The Shaping of Political Economy in the Scottish Enlightenment*, ed. I. Hont and M. Ignatieff (Cambridge: Cambridge University Pess, 1985), 271–315.
42. D. Hume, “Of Commerce”, in *Essays, Moral, Political, and Literary*, ed. E.F. Miller, 2nd ed. (Indianapolis, IN: Liberty Classics, 1987), 255.
43. “It is the business of a statesman to judge of the expediency of different schemes of oeconomy, and by degrees to model the minds of his subjects so as to induce them, from the allurement of private interest, to concur in the execution of his plan.” J. Steuart, *An Inquiry Into the Principles of Political Oeconomy: Edited and With an Introduction* (Edinburgh: Oliver & Boyd, 1966), 16–17; D. Winch, “Science and the Legislator: Adam Smith and After”, *The Economic Journal* 93 (1983): 501–520.
44. B. Wittrock, J. Heilbron, and L. Magnusson, “The Rise of the Social Sciences and the Formation of Modernity”, in *The Rise of the Social Sciences and the Formation of Modernity: Conceptual Change in Context, 1750–1850*, ed. J. Heilbron, L. Magnusson, and B. Wittrock (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1996), 1–34.
45. Steuart, *An Inquiry Into the Principles of Political Oeconomy*, 16–17.
46. For an excellent discussion setting these epistemological shifts in relation to administrative ideas and general European intellectual developments, see the introductory chapter on “government in eighteenth-century thought” in *Bentham and Bureaucracy*, L.J. Hume (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 17–54.
47. Commissioners for Examining the Public Accounts, “Commissioners for Examining the Public Accounts: Eighth Report”, *Journals of the House of Commons* 39 (26 November 1782 to 24 March 1784): 57.
48. Commissioners for Examining the Public Accounts, “Commissioners for Examining the Public Accounts: Seventh Report”, *Journals of the House of Commons* 38 (31 October 1780 to 10 October 1782): 711.
49. Commissioners for Examining the Public Accounts, “Commissioners for Examining the Public Accounts: Thirteenth Report”, *Journals of the House of Commons* 40 (18 May 1784 to 1 December 1785): 668.
50. For instance, the parliamentary Finance Committee of 1797–1798 even included the judiciary and police and introduced statistical analysis in order to compare the gathered numerical information in order to form a “more just and accurate View of the whole System and its Annual Produce”. Finance Committee, “Finance Committee: Twenty-third Report, 26 June 1798”, in *House of Commons Sessional Papers of the Eighteenth Century*, ed. S. Lambert (Wilmington, 1975), 110: 8.

51. A. Burns and J. Innes, eds., *Rethinking the Age of Reform: Britain 1780–1850* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).
52. Harling, *The Waning of ‘Old Corruption’*, 56–135.
53. J.R. Breihan, “William Pitt and the Commission on Fees, 1785–1801”, *Historical Journal* 27, no.1 (1984): 59–81.
54. Harling, *The Waning of ‘Old Corruption’*, 56–88.
55. J. Ehrman, *The Younger Pitt* (London: Constable, 1969), 1: 217–236.
56. Only with the final repeal of the Corn Laws did the language finally break off. Harling, *The Waning of ‘Old Corruption’*, 248–254.
57. While serving a two-and-a-half-year prison sentence, Henry Hunt regularly sent out letters “to the radical reformers”, into which he integrated letters addressed to him or other materials he received. H. Hunt, *To the Radical Reformers, Male and Female, of England, Ireland, and Scotland* (London, 1820–1822). For Hunt and his followers see J. Belchem, ‘Orator’ Hunt: *Henry Hunt and English Working-Class Radicalism* (London: Breviary Stuff Publications, 2012).
58. H. Hunt, *To the Radical Reformers, Male and Female, of England, Ireland, and Scotland* (London, 1820–1822, 24 September 1821), 4.
59. Ibid., 24 November 1821. [The Male and Female Reformers of the town of Manchester to Henry Hunt, 6 November 1821], 13.
60. E.g. Ibid., 10 February 1821, 4.
61. Ibid., 24 December 1821. [Leeds Public Meeting, “Mr. Mason”], 26.
62. The six acts were various legislative actions all aimed against radical agitation, by massively constraining various civil liberties.
63. M.J. Turner, *The Age of Unease: Government and Reform in Britain, 1782–1832* (Stroud: Sutton, 2000), 138–178; E.J. Evans, *The Forging of the Modern State: Early Industrial Britain, 1783–187*, 2nd ed. (London: Longman, 1996), 191–199.
64. George Harrison had served as the first permanent secretary of the Treasury. J. Torrance, “Sir George Harrison and the Growth of Bureaucracy in the Early Nineteenth Century”, *English Historical Review* 83, no. 326 (1968): 52–88.
65. G. Harrison, *Fragments and Scraps of History* (London: William Clowes, 1834), 73. The quote is part of a massive footnote spanning five pages in an otherwise historical work.
66. Arguably, it may be possible to form a very different reading of seventeenth-century ancient constitutionalism, which in some regard could qualify as a language of reform.

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# 3 The Making of “Federalism” in Eighteenth-Century France

## Between Reform and Revolution

*Manuela Albertone*

### Introduction

Federalism is a debated issue in French political culture that has constantly evoked the French Revolution and the struggle between the Girondins and the Jacobins. Our approach mainly focuses on how the federalist idea has emerged in political debates during the eighteenth century from the Old Regime to the Revolution and on how new semantic spaces gradually appeared. Particular attention will be paid to the contexts and contingencies that connected a family of words referring to the territorial reorganisation of the state to both reform and revolution, and the links in between. We will highlight how this perspective compels us to take into consideration wider issues such as the separation of powers, the idea of republic, the relationship between the legislative and the executive branches of the government, sovereignty, and democracy. By means of a semantic analysis, we aim to distinguish the phase of the political project from the moment of its manipulation.

What did the Jacobins imply when they accused the Girondins of federalism in 1793? When this word appeared in the revolutionary language, it was used to discredit a defined political group and was understood as an attempt to undermine the unity of the nation. Was it an expedient to bring about the final showdown between the two factions or did it actually hint at two different political traditions, opposing the idea of a strong central power and the dominant role of Paris to the decentralisation and the political participation of municipal realities? These questions require an accurate investigation, such as the one needed in order to understand what people meant by federalism and whether and how they associated this idea to a wider political culture.

### 1. Old and New Words in the Language of Reform During the Old Regime

Before the Revolution the term federalism had never occurred in the French language. *Fédération* and *confédération* were interchangeable

words: They implied the ideas of both union and autonomy and were associated with military defence. Until the *Supplément* of the 1798 fifth edition, the *Dictionnaire de l'Académie française* only includes the entry *confédération: ligue, alliance* without any reference to a specific form of government. In the *Dictionnaire de Trévoux fédératif* appears for the first time in the 1781 edition: "M. de Montesquieu s'est servi de ce mot, en parlant des différentes Provinces qui composent la République de Hollande, et qui sont unies entre elles par des Traités" ("M. de Montesquieu used this word in relation to the different provinces that form the Dutch Republic, whose union is established by Treaties").<sup>1</sup> In the third volume of the *Encyclopédie* by Diderot and d'Alembert (1753), *confédération* brings to mind the definition of the Académie française's *Dictionary*, even if it also applies to the nobles' associations in Poland, established despite the authorisation of the king "pour maintenir la liberté de la république"<sup>2</sup> ("to guarantee the freedom of the republic"). The entry *Republic* (1765) includes the subentry *République fédérative*, which was fully and openly extracted from the *Esprit des lois*, and the same passages appear in the same entry in the section *Economie politique* of the *Encyclopédie méthodique*.<sup>3</sup>

Montesquieu represented a turning point in the eighteenth-century discussion as his book IX of the *Esprit des lois* clearly associated federalism and republic in connection with the defence issue. The federal system is considered the kind of government most suitable for great states and the best form of defence: "une société de sociétés, qui en font une nouvelle, qui peut s'agrandir par des nouveaux associés qui se sont unis" ("a society of societies forming a new one that can be enlarged by the new associates that joined it"). Recurrent expressions are *république fédérative, membres confédérés*, as the constitutive parts of the association of *petites républiques*. By relying on the existing confederate republics and on historical examples such as Switzerland, Holland, Germany, and ancient Greece, Montesquieu's theory is remarkably concerned with the tenet of confederation.<sup>4</sup>

The emergence of the theory of the sovereign state in the Early Modern age, whose main feature was the unitarian character of the absolute monarchy, made federal government a disturbing and unattractive model.<sup>5</sup> The federal state, a political entity based on a constitution with a central sovereignty not entirely independent but different from the component states, was unknown until the American revolution and the creation of the first federal state.

The legitimacy of the American federal system found one of its most comprehensive assertions in *The Federalist*, the series of articles written by Alexander Hamilton, James Madison, and John Jay in order to ratify the Constitution of 1787. In the celebrated number IX, Hamilton referred to Montesquieu in order to legitimate federal government in large states and praised the American modern republic as opposed to

the oligarchic republics of the Old Regime. Confederacy and confederate republic are the most recurrent words, but he accurately distinguished the *federal government*, referring to the United States, from a *confederacy association of states*, because the American states were the constituent parts of the national sovereignty, even though they kept in their possession important portions of the sovereign power.<sup>6</sup>

The American revolution and the new state had a strong impact on the eighteenth-century political debate in Europe, making the tenets of liberty, democracy, political participation, and the separation of powers primary points of reference despite the lack of a deep interest for and knowledge of the federal system. For a long time America continued to be associated with Switzerland and the other existing confederative governments. Even in the 1798 edition of the *Dictionnaire de l’Académie française*, America is mentioned in the entry *fédératif* in relation to the idea of a society of states: “se dit de l’union, de l’alliance de plusieurs Etats ou Puissances politiques, consacrées par des traités ou des constitutions qui lient plus ou moins leurs intérêts ensemble”<sup>7</sup> (“it means the union or the alliance, established by treaties or by a constitution, of several states or political powers, whose interests are more or less shared”). This representation of the American experience therefore perpetuated the idea of separation rather than that of unity.

In the 1780s in the group of the *Américanistes*, Condorcet, Mazzei, Du Pont de Nemours, among others – the most informed authors about America at the eve of the Revolution, who looked at the American example to shape suitable reform projects for France – constitutional issues were intertwined with the American model. The American federal system was primarily connected to the question of the relationship between the legislative and the executive powers. Proceeding from this perspective, Filippo Mazzei’s *Recherches historiques et politiques sur les États-Unis de l’Amérique septentrionale* lamented in 1788 the rejection of the *Articles of Confederation* by disputing bicameralism and demanding the direct accountability of the government in front of the people.<sup>8</sup>

A year later in the notes that were added to the *Examen du gouvernement d’Angleterre, comparé aux Constitutions des États-Unis* – the French translation of John Stevens’s *Observations on Government*, a critique of John Adams’s *Defence of the Constitutions of Government of the United States* – Mazzei’s group denounced the American constitution as an imitation of the English model, which was founded on a system of checks and balances that they considered inconsistent with the principle of the unity of sovereignty.<sup>9</sup> Note XXVIII, probably by Mazzei, acknowledged “la nécessité d’une bonne constitution fédérative” (“the need for a good federative constitution”), and also challenged the strong power of the Congress and the role played by the president.<sup>10</sup>

Unicameralism, unity of law and sovereignty, administrative decentralisation, freedom of commerce, the critique of Montesquieu, and the

rejection of the British model and of the balance of powers: these were the points that the Américanistes put forward in order to promote the reforms in France, and which, as a consequence of the American experience, were considered achievable. This engagement was the expression of a political rationalism rooted in the physiocratic tradition and characterised by the links between politics and economics.

In the institutional pluralism of the Old Regime, the competition between centre and periphery and that between the monarchy and the society of orders marked the dynamics of reforms in France. The resistance to modernisation and centralisation induced the privileged orders to side against the royal action and the plans attempted by the last *contrôleurs généraux*, from Turgot to Necker and Calonne. Claims to spread the *États-Provinciaux* – originally confined to the *pays d'état* – all over the country aimed to limit the absolute monarchy and to strengthen the role played by the local assemblies of orders. Decentralisation was also at the heart of reform programmes, which were encouraged by the king and his ministers in order to undermine the corporative interests and to enhance the country's modernisation.

Since the 1750s, in the context of the debate on the administrative reorganisation, the Physiocrats formulated one of the most significant expressions of reformist planning for a territorial representation in a series of articulated projects for the creation of a system of provincial assemblies. The proposal went from the Marquis of Mirabeau to Du Pont de Nemours, to Le Trosne, until its evolution reached Condorcet, in the reality of the Revolution, as an articulate project of participatory democracy. Condorcet moved from the physiocratic discussion on representation to the idea of representative democracy, thus marking a turning point as he went from reflecting on the rights of the landowners to focusing on the rights of the citizens, from monarchy to republic, in defence of a free political participation that went beyond economic freedom.<sup>11</sup>

This innovative link between economics and politics formulated by the group around François Quesnay recognised the wealth derived from land as the foundation of the country's unity and made the landowners the expression of national representation by combining unity and territorial participation. In Condorcet's political rationalism, and in the circles where the physiocratic connection between politics and economics remained strong, the unity of social interest was seen as proceeding from the natural laws that regulated politics and were opposed to the weight of history and tradition rooted in the English model that was passed on by Montesquieu.

The economic foundations of political representation found an original interpretation in 1771 in the *Lettres d'Abraham Mansword*, published in the *Éphémérides du citoyen*, which combined federalism, republic, and the American model.<sup>12</sup> Sharing the physiocratic support of the colonies' independence from Britain, the *Lettres* foresaw the creation of a federal

republic in America and drafted a constitution for the new state moulded on Mirabeau’s project for provincial assemblies and on the belief that the federal system was the most suitable form of government for a republic. Nevertheless, the idea of federalism had not yet been clearly enunciated, as the lexical uncertainty shows – *confédération* and *confédératif* being the only recurrent words. The unexpected nexus between a federal system and a unity of sovereignty marks the *Lettres* original approach: “les Colonies angloises, connaissant combien il importe à leur sûreté commune de ne former entre elles qu’une seule république, une seule société, une seule puissance, ne peuvent manquer de s’unir les unes aux autres par une bonne et sage confédération, qui n’aura d’autre objet que de leur assurer également leurs droits de propriété et la liberté de les exercer”<sup>13</sup> (“The British Colonies, knowing how much they need to form but a single republic, a single society, a single power, in order to guarantee a communal state of security, cannot fail to unite all together in a good and wise confederation, whose only goal will be to protect both their right to property and the freedom of exercise it”).

From the Old Regime to the Revolution, the political implications of Physiocracy had represented an important stimulus to overthrow local particularisms and rethink the relationship between centre and periphery. The case made for taxation, which was at the heart of the physiocratic economic theory, revolved around the idea of national unity and represented the original core of the eighteenth-century concept of economics conceived as the modern language of politics: “l’impôt est le noeud foedératif, le vinculum sacrum de la société” (“taxes are the federative essence, society’s vinculum sacrum”), Du Pont de Nemours wrote in *De l’origine et des progrès d’une science nouvelle*.<sup>14</sup> The Revolution finally arose from the ruins of the institutional pluralism of the Old Regime and was nourished by reformist plans for a local political participation that could agree with national unity.

## 2. Making the Revolution

The final collapse of the Old Regime was characterised by the arm-wrestling match between the centre (the monarchy) and the periphery (the *parlements*), which reverberated in the *cahiers de doléances* and in the widespread hopes to bring together union and autonomy. At the outbreak of the Revolution the sovereignty shifted from the king to the nation, opening new perspectives on its territorial presence. The creation of the *départements*, along with the municipal revolution, which revitalised local demands for political participation, was rooted in this context. Proceeding from a rational approach, the new administrative bodies were conceived as the geometric overcoming of the old “provinces” fragmentation and were supposed to combine the process of centralisation with the local claims to an active role in the Revolution. Brissot spoke of the

*lien fédéral* (federal tie) of the new organisation to mark the respect of both unity and local differences.<sup>15</sup> The Constituent Assembly legitimated the local powers by creating the *municipalités* on 14 December 1789 and imposed a new territorial organisation by establishing 83 *départements* on 15 February 1790.

Commenting on Toqueville, Georges Lefebvre claimed, “les Français inclinent vers la décentralisation administrative” (“the French have a penchant for the administrative decentralisation”).<sup>16</sup> The lexical uncertainty discloses the complex intellectual and political frame in which the idea of the federal system was perceived. Two different meanings coexisted: On the one hand it corresponded to division and dissension, on the other to unity and solidarity. During the debates on the royal veto and the departments, in his famous speech of 7 September 1789, when he highlighted the difference between democracy and representative government, Sieyes associated a decentralised sovereignty to democracy, which was traditionally perceived as anarchy, claiming that the unity of the political body could find its expression only in the National Assembly. On the same day, Virieu supported the royal veto and bicameralism as an antidote against the danger of transforming France into a *government fédératif*, which he associated to the image of a *confédération de provinces*.<sup>17</sup>

Yet in 1789 and 1790, the municipal revolution encouraged the proliferation of local governments and of their demands of autonomy. Between December 1789 and January 1790, the new municipalities spontaneously gathered to form federations of fraternal associations for mutual defence against the counterrevolution. The movement arose during the spring of 1789 when confronted with the alarm of an aristocratic conspiracy. It is not by chance that the first demand took place in August 1789 in Franche-Comté, a region of old liberties near the Swiss Confederation. From the traditional meaning of military league, the word federation (*fédération*) metamorphosed into the idea of patriotic unity. The design of a new national union finally superseded the defence concern and reached its climax with the *Fête de la Fédération*, i.e. the gathering of the provincial federations in Paris, during the celebration for the first anniversary of the fall of the Bastille on 14 July 1790.

Neither the king, nor Bailly the Parisian mayor, nor part of the Assembly received the expression of the municipal commitment enthusiastically. Nonetheless, the Federation of 14 July 1790 became the celebration of the new order and was perceived as the final accomplishment of the Revolution.

Since the strong impact of Montesquieu and of the American model, federalism and republic, as we have seen, were intertwined. After the royal flight to Varennes on 20 June 1791, when the republican option became credible, an unspecified idea for a federal organisation that could preserve the national sovereignty and its unity began to emerge as a possible alternative to the monarchy. Two projects, which had significantly been

drafted by two later Montagnards, witnessed the progressive appearance of the federal model in the revolutionary context as a way to achieve national unity and to avoid the concentration of the executive power.

Written after the Champs-de-Mars massacre of 17 July 1791, *L'acéphocratie ou le Gouvernement fédératif démontré le meilleur de tous* advocated the federal government. Having indistinctly in mind the examples of Switzerland and America and Montesquieu's arguments, Billaud Varenne celebrated the *gouvernement fédératif*, which was formed by a constituent body and by a ratifying intermediary power settled in each of the 83 departments, where the districts, the municipalities, and the courts were entrusted with the executive power. According to Billaud Varenne, the *gouvernement sans tête*, the government without a head, was the only full expression of the representative government.<sup>18</sup>

For another Montagnard, Lavicomterie, a federative republic could find its articulation only in a federation of towns and villages that would be set up in every department. The *République sans impôt* – printed in the mid-1792<sup>19</sup> by the Cercle Social, the radical printers of most of the Girondins' writings – outlined the unifying impact of a political decentralisation. National laws and local administration both contributed to national unity. Lavicomterie shared Billaud Varenne's belief in the nexus between the federal system and the unity of sovereignty, which he did not associate in any way to the American model because it evoked for him the image of division.<sup>20</sup> For both authors the rejection of the king's role was made manifest in the decentralisation of the executive power, which was not inconsistent with the principle of unity embodied by the National Assembly. These singular federative plans were set in the frame of a wider citizenship that had been conceived in radical milieux, such as the Cercle Social, the club des Cordeliers, and the Confédération universelle des Amis de la Vérité. Their intention was to encourage a rapid increase of the *sociétés fraternelles*, which were disseminated centres of political discussion, associated by federative links, and which claimed a role in the elaboration of political choices outside the National Assembly.

### 3. The Invention of Federalism

In any case, the turning point in the history of the definition of federalism in the French political discourse was represented by the revolution of 10 August 1792, the event that marked the birth of the republic. The word *fédéralisme* entered the revolutionary lexicon by a semantic shift: It took on a clear and negative meaning and became a political argument at the heart of the clash between the Girondins and the Jacobins. It is an exemplary case of a word shaping a political space.

How was the nebulous family of words *fédération*, *confédération*, and *fédératif* supplanted by *fédéralisme*, *fédéraliste*, and *fédérer*, synonyms of secession, division, treason, sedition, plot, and counter-revolution?

After the fall of the monarchy, the proclamation of the republic put the issue of the federal government, among other kinds of republican systems, at the centre of the discussion. Several alarming events troubled the political scene: At the eve of the 10 August revolution 20,000 *fédérés*, i.e. local National Guardsmen, converged on Paris, despite the king's veto, to defend their fatherland and took part in the event as a revolutionary force.

During the first debates on the new republic, the federal system emerged as a possible republican order in some moderate milieus where, in the first part of 1792, the first French translation of *The Federalist* by Jay, Madison, and Hamilton appeared<sup>21</sup> (the last two were made French citizens on 26 August). In the French edition of the book, the word *fédéraliste* is moulded on the American title, and in the famous essay n. IX, where Hamilton celebrated the federal system, the translator not only employed *confédération* and *confédéré*, but he also spoke of *gouvernement fédératif* as synonym of *gouvernement fédéral*.<sup>22</sup>

Between September 1792 and the days 31 May–2 June 1793, which resulted in the arrest of the Girondins, a series of events hastened the radicalisation of the revolution – the September Massacres, the trial of the king, the Vendée uprising, and the war. The possibility of a federalist choice for the new republic was meditated upon during the first few days of September at the Society of Jacobins, where the issue of the federal government was debated and finally rejected. On 7 September Chabot criticised the *gouvernement fédératif*; his arguments revolved around two main issues: the importance of creating an effective executive power ("il faut que l'impulsion parte d'un centre commun et se communique simultanément à toutes ses parties") ("the impetus has to proceed from a common centre and to expand simultaneously to all its parts") and the pivotal role of Paris.<sup>23</sup> The recurring references to Switzerland, America, and the German area, and to Rousseau and the *Traité sur le government de la Pologne*, revealed the persistent lack of a real knowledge of the federal government and of the American system.

The opposition between the Girondins and the Jacobins stemmed from their requited suspicion and from the reciprocal charge of jeopardising the unity of the nation. On 23 September Roland, who was still Minister of the Interior, demanded a military defence organisation for the National Assembly; the next day Buzot<sup>24</sup> and other Girondins called for a departmental guard to protect the Convention.<sup>25</sup> On 25 September, Lasource denounced the despotism of Paris and of its Commune and solicited the departments' action to prevent "ces divisions fédératives" ("these federative sections"). Danton called for the death penalty against those who intended to disunite France, and Robespierre opposed the allegation of federalism to the charge of dictatorship. The same day they announced the French Republic to be one and indivisible. In this frame, the word federalism became a neologism as a shared synonym of division and it

became a major issue instead of the notion of federation which evoked the idea of union. As such, it is a key word in the writings that marked the progressive radicalisation of the political context.

On 24 October 1792 Brissot, who had been suspended by the Society of Jacobins, rejected the charge of federalism. “Ils m'accusent de vouloir la république fédérative” (“They accuse me of wishing for a federative republic”), he claimed, denouncing the confusion as regards the American system. He was blamed for his appreciation of the *Federalist*: “Ignorans! Ils ne savent pas que le Fédéraliste est précisément un ouvrage fait contre le fédéralisme, pour ramener à l'unité de gouvernement”<sup>26</sup> (“Idiots! They don't know that the *Federalist* is a work against federalism, whose goal is the unity of government”). On 30 October, Barbaroux openly condemned the growing power of the Parisian sections, and he also rejected in turn a *république fédérative*, thus making a claim to unity.<sup>27</sup> During the same months, in *Ni Marat ni Roland*, Anarchis Cloots attacked the Rolands and their *fédéralisme*. He associated *royalistes* and *fédéralistes*, and, while speaking of Brissot and his group as ready to transform France into a mass of “républiques isolées et protégées” (“isolated and protected republics”), he neologised *isoliste* as a synonym of *fédéraliste*.<sup>28</sup>

“L'accusation de fédéralisme est devenue une des injures à la mode” (“The charge of federalism has become a trendy insult”), Condorcet wrote on the *Chronique de Paris* on 9 February 1793, while retracing its story and dating it back to 1790 and to the discussion on the creation of the departments.<sup>29</sup> Between October 1792 and January 1793, a new word, *brissotin*, was coined to indicate the “parti des fédéralistes”.<sup>30</sup> In the end a strong weapon was available in the final struggle between the Jacobins and the Girondins after their banishment from the Convention and the outbreak of the departments’ insurrection, namely the *révolte fédéraliste*: starting from 17 September the Law of Suspects included the charge of federalism among the counter-revolutionary crimes and was applied on 31 October 1793 to condemn Brissot and the other Girondins leaders to the death penalty. The allegation of federalism implied an attempt to undermine the unity of the nation, along with the project to split France (*fédéraliser*) into a Northern and a Southern republic, according to the report Amar presented to the Convention on 3 October, which denounced a “système de fédéralisme et tyrannie”.<sup>31</sup>

The principles of popular sovereignty, of national unity, and of the central role of the law were universally shared by the French revolutionaries. For both the Girondins and the Jacobins federalism had a negative value, even though they represented two entirely different political models. This opposition was synthesised by the strong debate on the constitutional project that Condorcet presented at the Convention on 15 and 16 February 1793.

The *Plan de Constitution* advocated a democratic system with a dynamic and decentralised representation. Condorcet’s idea of

representative democracy implied a continuous effort of law-making inside and outside the parliamentary institutions. He combined participation and democracy with a plurality of elected primary assemblies made of citizens, which were entitled to deliberate and to correspond with the National Assembly through the permanent exercise of popular and unitary sovereignty. Thanks to the circulation of information, the plurality of opinions and the constant relation between electors and elected, the representative government became the preeminent way to reach the best and truest deliberations, thus making democracy the exercise of political rights at different levels and in different places while taking for granted the supreme authority of the National Assembly. For Condorcet's political rationalism, which was close to Physiocracy, the interaction among citizens was essential to comprehend the rationality of the law. The making of democracy was conceived as a process to reach the truth as well as the way to give legal form to political participation, consequently preventing any angry and irrational excesses of the mob.

Condorcet submitted his project in the context of the growing radicalisation of the National Assembly, of the dispute on the political centrality of the capital, and of the struggle between Girondins and Montagnards. On 24 April, Saint Just attacked the plan he labelled “une représentation fédérative, qui fait des lois un conseil représentatif qui les exécute”<sup>32</sup> (“a federative representation, which turns the laws into a representative and executive committee”). Condorcet defended his project against the Jacobins' attacks of federalism and the accusation of making an attempt to destroy the unity of the nation.<sup>33</sup> Beside the explicit charges addressed to the plan, Saint-Just actually opposed a different idea of the executive power: He understood its unity as the expression of the unity of the nation and he comprehended its competence as overcoming the simple execution of the law.<sup>34</sup> He combined this opinion with the rejection of representative democracy as a process of mutual exchange between the deputies and their electors based on territorial participation, which undermined the pivotal role of Paris. These positions proceeded from a mystic idea of the social body, which repudiated plural expressions of the sovereignty of the people rooted in the country.

#### **4. A New Word Enters the French Language**

This neologism generated by the Revolution in the frame of the struggle between two political groups entered the French language with these specific characteristics. Despite the growing number and variety of dictionaries published during the Revolution,<sup>35</sup> the entry federalism is absent until the Thermidorian years and only the most attentive observers of lexical changes have paid attention to the new words that had risen in the political context.

According to this perspective, the main goal of Leonard Snetlage's *Nouveau Dictionnaire Français* was “prendre la naissance des mots pour ainsi dire sur le fait . . . voir un Peuple entier révolutionner sa langue”<sup>36</sup> (“catching the moment, so to speak, when words are born . . . seeing an entire people revolutionize their language”). Among the words that “doivent leur naissance en partie aux passions les plus violentes”<sup>37</sup> (“partly take their origin from the most violent passions”), we can find *fédéralisme* and *fédéraliste* opposed to *fédération* and *fédéré*, which evoked the ideas of unity and harmony. The terms federalism and federalist, which were connected to the republic, were also related to the departments' uprising and were synonyms of splitting up and isolation: “c'est la faction du Midi de la France, qui eut son principal foyer dans les villes de Lyon, Bourdeaux [sic], Marseille et Toulon”<sup>38</sup> (“it is the faction that was centred in Lyon, Bourdeaux [sic], Marseille et Toulon”). Federalists were one with moderates and aristocrats and were associated to Brissot and the *brissotins*.

The same year, the *Dictionnaire portatif de la langue française* included federalism and federalist along with *fédératif* and *fédération*: the first two referred to criminal association and to the crime of treason, *crime de lèse-Nation*, while the last two alluded to the ceremony of 14 July 1790 and to a coalition to defend liberty.<sup>39</sup>

In line with the Revolutionary Tribunal allegation, in 1796 the *Néologiste français* made reference to a project for the creation of a republic in the South to characterise the family of words regarding the tenet of federalism: *fédéralisation*, *fédéraliser*, *fédéralisme*, and *fédéraliste*. Having abandoned the previous lexical confusion, the word federalism had finally lost its ambiguity and was separated from *fédération* and *fédéré*.<sup>40</sup>

Nevertheless, the *Dictionnaire de l'Académie française* was rather late in registering the movements of the French Language, as it included the words *fédéralisme*, “système, doctrine du Gouvernement fédératif” and *fédéraliste*, “partisan du Gouvernement fédératif”<sup>41</sup> only in the 1798 *Supplément contenant les mots nouveaux en usage depuis la Révolution*.

During the eighteenth century, the idea of a federal system of government appeared primarily in connection with the tenet of the republic and with American events. In the context of the French Old Regime, the demands for local power were traditionally associated with the privileged orders. A new and antithetic approach to the idea of representation, rooted in the economic culture – particularly in the Physiocracy – and in the American revolution, made it possible to combine the idea of a decentralised political participation with the unity of sovereignty. During the Revolution this legacy survived, and it represented an original and typically French way of democracy which found its most complete expression in Condorcet's constitutional project. The emphasis on the struggle between the Girondins and the Jacobins has often overshadowed the continuity of the discussion, which went from the issue of decentralisation to a revolutionary project of democracy.

“Je sais positivement qu'il fut plusieurs fois question au Comité de salut public de faire un rapport sur le fédéralisme et que ce projet fut toujours ajourné faute de preuves” (“I positively know that the question of a report on federalism was considered several times at the Committee of Public Safety, and that this project was always postponed on account of lack of evidence”), Montagnard Baudot wrote.<sup>42</sup> The charge of federalism was shaped by the Jacobins to outlaw their opponents and to boost the radicalisation of the Revolution. Federalism was not considered a form of government suitable for France, and the word has had a negative meaning for both the Girondins and the Jacobins. Nevertheless, beyond the contingencies that the struggle has originated among them, it has highlighted two opposing models of representative democracy rooted in different political cultures.

## Notes

1. *Dictionnaire universel François et latin, vulgairement appelé Dictionnaire de Trévoux* (Paris: Compagnie des libraires associés, 1781), 4:80.
2. *Encyclopédie, ou Dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers, par une société de gens de lettres* (Paris: Briasson, 1751–1765), 3:847.
3. *Encyclopédie méthodique: Économie politique et diplomatique* (Paris: Panckoucke, 1788), 4:51–52.
4. C.-L.S.d.L.B.d., Montesquieu, *De l'Esprit des Lois*, ed. R. Derathé (Paris: Garnier, 1973), 1:141–144.
5. John Locke's use of the word *federative* refers to the defensive link among the members of a society (J. Locke, *Two Treatises of Government*, ed. Peter Laslett (New York, NY: The New American Library, 1965), 409–412); Rousseau speaks of Poland as a confederation (J.-J. Rousseau, “Considérations sur le gouvernement et sur sa réformation projetée en avril 1772”, in *Contrat social ou Principes de droit politique*, ed. J.-J. Rousseau (Paris: Garnier, 1923), 390).
6. On the uncertainty of eighteenth-century political theory on federalism, see D. Lacorne, *L'invention de la république: Le modèle américain* (Paris: Hachette, 1991), 141–146.
7. *Dictionnaire de l'Académie française* (Paris: J.J. Smits, 1798), 1:573.
8. F. Mazzei, *Recherches historiques et politiques sur les États-Unis de l'Amérique septentrionale*, 4 vols. (Colle, Paris: Froullé, 1788). They shared the arguments of the Anti-Federalists and later of Jefferson's Republicans, who challenged Hamilton's Federalists. During the American political clash of the 1780s and 1790s the Republicans, champions of the decentralised democracy, confronted the Federalists, supporters of a strong central power.
9. J. Stevens, *Examen du gouvernement d'Angleterre, comparé aux constitutions des États-Unis: Où l'on réfute quelques assertions contenues dans l'ouvrage de m. Adams intitulé. . .*, trans. F. Mazzei (London, 1789).
10. The *Analyse des papiers anglais*, the political journal founded by the Count of Mirabeau, celebrated the American constitution of 1787 (n. 1, 27 November 1787, n. 14, 12–15 January 1788). The author of these articles, probably Mirabeau, an admirer of the American model, praised the federal system as the best form of government, even though it was doomed to collapse because of a wrong distribution of powers.

11. M.-J.-A.-N. Caritat de Condorcet, “Essai sur la constitution et les fonctions des assemblées provinciales”, in *Oeuvres*, ed. A. Condorcet O’Connor and M.-F. Arago (Paris: F. Didot frères, 1847–1849), 8:115–659.
12. “Lettres d’Abraham Mansword, Citoyen de Philadelphie, à ses compatriotes de l’Amérique septentrionale, Première Lettre contenant une idée des loix fondamentales qui pourront être adoptées par les diverses Provinces américaines, lorsqu’elles seront devenues une République confédérative”, *Ephémérides du citoyen*, no. 11 (1771): 75–112; “Seconde Lettre contenant une idée de la constitution à donner aux États Généraux de l’Amérique septentrionale, et des Cérémonies à observer lors de leur tenue”, *Ephémérides du citoyen*, no. 12 (1771): 6–45. On the *Lettres*, apparently by both Du Pont de Nemours and Le Mercier de la Rivière, and the controversial question of the authorship, see my essay, M. Albertone, “Décentralisation territoriale et unité de la nation: Les ‘Lettres d’Abraham Mansword’ entre physiocratie et modèle américain”, in *Centralisation et fédéralisme: Les modèles et leur circulation dans l'espace européen francophone, germanophone et italo-phone*, edited by M. Biard, J.-N. Ducange, J-Y. Frétigné (Mont-Saint-Aignan: Presses universitaires de Rouen et du Havre, 2018), 103–114.
13. “Lettres d’Abraham Mansword”, 95.
14. P.-S. Du Pont de Nemours, *De l’origine et des progrès d’une science nouvelle* (1768), ed. A. Dubois (Paris: Paul Geuthner, 1910), 20.
15. *Patriote françois*, no. XVI (14 August 1789): 4.
16. G. Lefebvre, “Introduction to Alexis-Henri-Charles de Clérel de Tocqueville”, in *Oeuvres complètes: L’Ancien Régime et la Révolution*, Vol. II, bk. 1 (Paris: Gallimard, 1952), 29.
17. *Archives parlementaires de 1787 à 1860*, ed. J. Madival et al., 1st ser. (Paris: Centre national de la recherche scientifique, 1971), 7 September 1789, 8:589.
18. J.-N. Billaud Varenne, *L’acéphocratie ou Le gouvernement fédératif démontré le meilleur de tous, pour un grand empire, par les principes de la politique et les faits de l’histoire* (Paris, 1791).
19. L. Lavicomterie de Saint Simon, *République sans impôt* (Paris: chez les directeurs du cercle social, 1792). It was announced by the *Moniteur* of 9 June 1792.
20. Another Montagnard, Thibaudeau, made the case for the federal government later in his *Mémoires* (A.-C. Thibaudeau, *Mémoires sur la Convention et le Directoire* (Paris: Ponthieu, 1827), 1:39). See, Y. Delaporte, “‘Un Montagnard’ fédéraliste: Antoine-C. Thibaudeau, député de la Vienne à la Convention nationale, 1792–1795”, in *Existe-t-il un fédéralisme jacobin? Études sur la Révolution*, ed. Ministère de l’Éducation Nationale, Comité des Travaux Historiques et Scientifiques (Poitiers: Comité des travaux historiques et scientifiques, 1986), 1:121–135.
21. *Le fédéraliste, ou Collection de quelques Écrits en faveur de la Constitution, proposée aux États-Unis de l’Amérique, par la Convention convoquée en 1787*, trans. C.M. Trudaine de la Sablière, 2 vols. (Paris: Buisson, 1792). See, A. De Francesco, “Traduzioni e rivoluzione: La storia meravigliosa della prima versione in francese del Federalist (Paris: Buisson, 1792)”, *Rivista storica italiana* 123 (2011): 61–110.
22. *Le fédéraliste*, 1:75–83.
23. F.A. Aulard, *La Société des Jacobins: Recueil de documents pour l’histoire du club des Jacobins de Paris* (Paris: Jouast, Noblet Quantin, 1892), 4:260–261.
24. Among the Girondins Buzot was the only convinced supporter of a federalist solution (F.-N.-L. Buzot, *Mémoires*, ed. M. Gaudet (Paris: Baudouin, 1823), 57; J.-M.R. de la Platière, *Mémoires*, ed. C. Perroud (Paris: Mercure de France, 1986), 85, 111).

25. In an article on the *Chronique de Paris* (26 September 1792), 1078, Condorcet considered the departmental guard appropriate to guarantee: “l’unité de l’empire, la défense de Paris”.
26. J.-P. Brissot, *À tous les républicains de France: sur la société des Jacobins* (Paris: Imprimerie du Cercle Social, 1792), 23. On 15 November 1789, while relating the departments plan presented by Thouret, Brissot had already made the case for a *lien fédéral* among the municipal constitutions of the different provinces (J.-P. Brissot, *Observations sur le plan de la municipalité de Paris* (Paris: Au bureau du Patriote François, 1789), V). On the opposing meanings of federalism in the American and in the French political culture during the age of the revolutions, see A. De Francesco, “Federalist Obsession and Jacobin Conspiracy: France and the United States in a Time of Revolution, 1789–1794”, in *Rethinking the Atlantic World: Europe and America in the Age of Democratic Revolutions*, ed. M. Albertone and A. De Francesco (London: Palgrave, 2009), 239–256.
27. *Archives parlementaires* (30 October 1792), 53:79.
28. A. Cloots, *Ni Marat, ni Roland* (Paris: Desenne, 1792), 6–14. Cloots attacked Gorsas and the *Courrier des départements* and he rejected Montesquieu’s, Mably’s, and Rousseau’s arguments on the federal system, which he held as instigations to the *morcellement fédératif*. (*Chronique de Paris*, 17 October 1792, 1163 and 18 October 1792, 1167).
29. Ibid, 9 February 1793, 157.
30. Basire at the Society of Jacobins (*La Société des Jacobins*, 2 January 1793, 4:639–640).
31. G. Walter, *Actes du tribunal révolutionnaire* (Paris: Mercure de France, 1986), 170–249; A. Amar, *Acte d'accusation contre plusieurs membres de la Convention nationale, au nom du Comité de sûreté générale* (Paris: Imprimerie nationale, 1793).
32. L.-A. de Saint Just, “Discours sur la Constitution de France, honoré dans la séance du 24 avril à la Convention nationale”, in *Théorie politique*, ed. L.-A. de Saint Just and A. Liénard (Paris: Seuil, 1976), 190.
33. M.-J.-A.-N. Caritat de Condorcet, “Aux citoyens français sur la nouvelle constitution”, in *Oeuvres*, ed. A. Condorcet O’Connor and M.-F. Arago (Paris: F. Didot frères, 1847–1849), 12:651–675.
34. See M. Troper, “Responsabilité politique et fonction gouvernementale”, in *La responsabilité des gouvernants*, ed. O. Beaud and J.-M. Blanquer (Paris: Descartes et Cie, 1999), 41–44.
35. U. Ricken, “Les dictionnaires et l’image de la Révolution”, in *L’Image de la Révolution française*, ed. M. Vovelle (Paris: Pergamon Press, 1989), 1:325–335.
36. L.W. Snetlage, *Nouveau Dictionnaire Français contenant les expressions de nouvelle Création du Peuple Français: Ouvrage additionnel au Dictionnaire de l'Académie française et à tout autre Vocabulaire* (Gottingue: chez Jean Chrétien Dicterich Libraire, 1795), V. Snetlage, lecturer of French at the University of Gottingen from 1793 to 1804, was Engels’ great-uncle.
37. Ibid., XV.
38. Ibid., 92.
39. P. Richelet, *Dictionnaire portatif de la langue française: extrait du grand dictionnaire de Pierre Richelet: Nouv. Éd., augmentée de tous les mots nouveaux adoptés par l'usage et de ceux créés pendant le cours de la Révolution, par M. de Wailly* (Paris: Volland, 1795), 416.
40. C.-F. Reinhard, *Le Néologiste français* (Nurberg: Grattenaver, 1796), 166–167.

41. *Dictionnaire de l'Académie français, Supplément contenant les mots nouveaux en usage depuis la Révolution*, 5th ed. (Paris: J.J. Smits, 1798), 1:573.
42. M.-A. Baudot, *Notes historiques sur la Convention nationale, le Directoire, l'Empire et l'exil des votans* (Paris: Imprimerie D. Jouast, 1893), 290.

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## 4 Ambiguity in Translation

### Communicating Economic Reform in the Multilingual Republic of Berne

*Lisa Kolt and Lothar Schilling*

#### Introduction

When the *Economic Society of Berne* was founded in February 1759, it was confronted with specific linguistic circumstances. Since the conquest of the Vaud in 1536, the territory of the Republic of Berne included a substantial francophone population.<sup>1</sup> Subsequently, the Franco-German bilingualism was a challenge for the Bernese administration – a task that became more complex with growing regional disparities, especially with regard to its French-speaking territory.<sup>2</sup> Like other economic societies in France, England, and Scotland, the Economic Society of Berne aimed at improving the economy of the republic by promoting agricultural reforms. With reference to Enlightenment discourses, the members of the society developed knowledge intended to improve the living conditions of large parts of the population. They framed this knowledge by insisting on its practical usefulness and by aligning it to overarching concepts which allowed them to legitimize and popularize their projects of reform.<sup>3</sup>

Previous research has largely investigated the history of the Economic Society of Berne.<sup>4</sup> However, it has not explicitly focused on the conceptual framework guiding reformist action of economic societies.<sup>5</sup> Yet, recurring patterns of arguments raise various questions concerning the guiding concepts which framed the activities of these societies and arranged their ways of promoting innovative methods regarding agriculture and public policy. The Bernese case is particularly interesting, since the matter of translation needs to be considered. By exploring the different options of transferring specific semantics from one language to another, concepts evoked both in French and in German can be examined.

In this chapter, we cannot provide an exhaustive probing of these issues. Instead, three frequently used, interrelated terms and their varieties are selected: *réform/réformation/Reformation* occurring in French and (less frequently) in German; the expression *révolution* exclusively made use of in French; and the German term *Aufnahme*. Thus, the analysis can do

justice to the complexity of the concepts denoted and investigate their contextualization in the Bernese setting.

## 1. Historical Contexts: The Republic and the Economic Society of Berne

The Economic Society of Berne tried to respond to the bilingual challenge by choosing differentiated communication and information strategies. From the very beginning, it communicated both in German and in French and made use of a variety of media to convey its cause.<sup>6</sup> For instance, the news of the founding of the Economic Society of Berne was spread in French, German, and Latin journals.<sup>7</sup> Moreover, the society's primary medium to discuss and popularize issues of agricultural reform was a journal published simultaneously in French and German. This journal, called *Mémoires et observations recueillies par la Société Oeconomique de Berne* and *Abhandlungen und Beobachtungen durch die Ökonomische Gesellschaft zu Bern gesammelt*<sup>8</sup> respectively, contained corresponding articles in each version. Each article was, with very few exceptions, translated into the other language, thus constituting a considerable corpus of parallel texts in French and German.

In articles that discussed agricultural issues and argued with empirically based knowledge, it was inevitable to address peasants as the idealized recipients of the society's efforts for reform:

NOUS prions cependant d'avance, qu'on ne s'arrête pas trop au stile de cet ouvrage. Nous sommes Suisses, & l'allemand est la langue maternelle de la plus grande partie de la Suisse. Nous écrivons principalement pour nos compatriotes. Cette considération nous assurera le pardon, à ce que nous esperons, de bien des fautes contre la pureté du langage & contre l'exactitude de l'ortographe.<sup>9</sup>

Popularizing scientific knowledge, therefore, was a major concern for the members of the *Economic Society*. At the same time, they strived to integrate practical knowledge of peasants into their projected reforms.

The bilingual publication of the journal sought to meet local requirements and to respect both the German- and French-speaking populations. The French edition also had the great advantage of giving access to the European and mostly francophone *Republic of Letters*. The Economic Society of Berne's sphere of activity was never supposed to be limited to the Bernese territory. On the contrary, the society and its members aimed at positioning themselves on a European stage and at joining erudite exchange among European scholars. An essential objective for actors of the *Economic Enlightenment*<sup>10</sup> was the circulation of agricultural knowledge and the promotion of projects of reform. This

involved using multilingual communication channels and participating in a common discursive frame.

Therefore, the bilingual approach responded to a variety of requirements. It addressed both the peasant populations of the territory as well as the Francophile elites in Berne and, not least, the members of the Republic of Letters interested in economic discussions. Invoking foremost the rural population as addressees responded to rhetoric requirements and modes of the authors' self-fashioning as contributors to the common good, thereby referencing an established argument of political discourses since antiquity.<sup>11</sup> Hence, addressing the rural population was both the society's genuine intention and a *topos*. It proclaimed an easily understandable, straightforward language to raise the acceptance of reform projects among local peasant communities. In order to achieve this goal and to take care of linguistic heterogeneity, the question of translation and transfer became an important issue within the Economic Society of Berne.

The western Swiss Cantons appeared to be a Franco-German *contact zone*<sup>12</sup> characterized by intense translation activities in the late eighteenth century.<sup>13</sup> Local editors published numerous translations of successful French works, thus contributing to the circulation of knowledge and ideas.<sup>14</sup> Since 1762, the volumes of the *Mémoires* and *Abhandlungen* were published by the *Typographische Gesellschaft Bern*, which became famous for reprints and translations to French, German, and Italian.<sup>15</sup>

The matter of translation is particularly interesting with regard to the conceptual level. Contemporary actors largely believed in the possibility of rendering the author's intentions accurately when translating articles. Still, the translators' methods varied – some translated word by word, others aimed at transferring the pragmatic intentions.<sup>16</sup> Vincenz Bernhard Tscharner, a prominent member of the Economic Society of Berne and co-founder of the *Typographische Gesellschaft*, insisted on the importance of "good" translations true to the original:

nous avons songé entre autres à de bonnes traductions de l'anglais du français &c. ( . . . ); il y a des ouvrages de Bolingbroke p. ex. & d'autres autheurs distingués qui meriteroient d'etre traduits par des gens capables d'écrire bien eux mêmes; ( . . . ) notre but est d'exceller par la propreté des éditions.<sup>17</sup>

The editors of the *Mémoires* and *Abhandlungen* seem to have attached a certain importance to appropriate translations. Little information about the translators and the process of translation is given inside the journal. In some cases, the translator is named or problems of translating specific terms are discussed. With the exception of some technical terms, the editors obviously believed that a common conceptual framework could be referenced in both the French and the German texts and that translation

did not influence the pragmatic impact of the articles. The historiographic analysis of language usage, however, needs to take the specific features of each language into account as well as the implications of both the historical and the linguistic contexts that are referenced in the texts. Moreover, traces of dialects spoken in eighteenth-century Berne are likely to be found in the *Mémoires* and *Abhandlungen*. The Bernese varieties of French and German show specific features that need to be considered in any semantic and discourse analysis.

## 2. Key Terms: Accessing the Conceptional Framework of Reform

Proponents of the German *Begriffsgeschichte* and the *Cambridge School* have provided influential approaches to the history of concepts and the varied semantics of historical terms. Historiography needs to locate concepts in specific contexts and to consider intentions and ambitions of the actors. However, some authors in this historiographical tradition had limited their investigation to an elite of writers, leaving aside non-erudite and popular usages of the concepts analyzed or even ignoring concepts without obvious political impact. Furthermore, presumptions for the selection of concepts were mostly based on terms still relevant in modern political language. Terms that either have lost their ideational connotation or vanished completely since the eighteenth century remain underestimated.

Any inquiry on the conceptual framework of the Economic Society of Berne needs to meet the challenge of the bilingual context. Particular features of the German and French language and their Bernese varieties influence the modes of conceptualization and the respective argumentative options of legitimizing reformist action. Considering translations gives additional evidence of how contemporary actors interpreted terms and discursive patterns.

The choice of *reform* and *revolution* as indicators of a complex field of ideas framing the texts of the Economic Society of Berne was influenced by a variety of assumptions concerning their relevance in this specific historical context. Scientific research has identified *reform* as a central concept of the Enlightenment. Franco Venturi has insisted on its importance in Enlightenment discourse, as did many others. He used it to describe specific reform projects as well as ideas for the improvement of social and economic conditions.<sup>18</sup> *Reform* seems to be a constituent part of the horizon of economic societies and of Enlightenment aspirations. *Revolution*, on the other hand, had a circular notion for a long time, adopting reformist semantics and ideological connotations only in the late eighteenth century.<sup>19</sup>

In contrast, *Aufnahme* and *Aufnehmen* have mostly been disregarded in previous research.<sup>20</sup> At present, their use is restricted to an immediate,

tangible context and designates *admission* or *reception*. Up to the early nineteenth century, however, the terms *Aufnahme/Aufnehmen* and the equivalent verbal constructions *in Aufnahme/Aufnehmen bringen* rather signified an abstract idea of *encouragement* or *improvement of circumstances*, “ein beständiger Fortgang zu einem immer florisanten Zustande einer Sache”.<sup>21</sup> In the *Abhandlungen*, the frequent occurrence of *Aufnahme* or its varieties indicates the eminent importance of the concept in question and promises a rewarding investigation on its use.

Evidently, any approach to the conceptual mindset of the society’s members starting with key terms of modern political language risks to superimpose semantics and even concepts that did not survive the fundamental semantic changes of the *Sattelzeit*. Certain terms, such as *reform* and *revolution*, lost some of their notions and gained others, thus becoming what Reinhart Koselleck calls *Leitbegriffe*,<sup>22</sup> guiding concepts. Other terms lost their abstract and ideational dimension completely. In order to meet the complex modes of premodern conceptualization, an inquiry which focuses on these faded semantics and concepts is indispensable.

### **3. Translating and Conceptualizing *Reform*, *Revolution*, and *Aufnahme***

As a consequence of the preceding observations, it is necessary to examine the three terms and their applications in different contexts. Special focus is given to the semantic dimension of progress and future-oriented (economic) development that each term conveyed in a specific way. To explore the varied usage of the three terms, we have to analyze a considerable number of texts. The *ETH Bibliothek* provides digital access to the journals of the Economic Society of Berne including a keyword search which allows to isolate passages containing the selected terms.<sup>23</sup> The statistic value of this method is restricted due to occasionally inadequate text recognition of the Gothic types in the German version of the journal and due to blurred types in both versions.<sup>24</sup> In general, multiple variations of spelling the terms in question, especially in the German texts, complicate the analysis.<sup>25</sup> Nevertheless, this method allows for extracting a sample of passages containing the three terms and contrasting them with the equivalent passages in the other language.

With regard to the terms derived from the Latin *reformatio*, it is particularly important to emphasize the variety of meanings of the words *réforme* and *réformation* in French, of the term *Reformation* in German, and of the respective derivatives.<sup>26</sup> *Réforme* and *réformation* were both ambivalent, signifying on the one hand *modification* or *change*, on the other hand the Protestant Reformation as a historical event. *Reformation* is more frequently used in the latter sense in the German sources but denotes in some cases *modification* or *improvement*. Interestingly

enough, this notion could be retransferred to the ecclesiastical context. In a compilation of articles in the 1766 volume, the French word *réformation* is rendered to *Kirchenverbesserung* in the German text, which addresses the idea of change for the better and applies it to the apparently benevolent effects of sixteenth-century Reformation in Berne.<sup>27</sup> In other texts, *réformer* prevalently signifies *to abolish*, for instance, when authors declare commons as inefficient and recommend their abolition.<sup>28</sup> The meaning of *réforme* can vary within the same text. For example, in Muret's "Mémoire sur l'état de la population dans le Pays de Vaud", *réforme* is rendered to *Veränderung*, *Verbesserung*, and *Reformation* and carries positive as well as negative connotations.<sup>29</sup> This article deserves further attention. By addressing the highly controversial question of population policy and invoking the "grand besoin de réforme",<sup>30</sup> it afflicted core competences of the Bernese regime. It provoked harsh reactions and sanctions and marked a turning point in the Society's history. At the same time, this article features the highest number of occurrences of *réforme* and *réformation* in the whole corpus of the publications of the Society – a striking coincidence.

Concerning the terms derived of *revolutio*, there are no hits in the German *Abhandlungen*. The French term *révolution* is rather rendered to *Veränderungen* and *Abänderungen* but can also mean *revolt* (*Unruhen*<sup>31</sup>) and *agitation* (*Wechsel*). Besides, the traditional connotation of circularity is still present in some translations of the term *revolution*:

On les laisse pendant deux ans en jachères, & après chaque révolution de cinq ans elles deviennent meilleures & moins légères. . . .<sup>32</sup>

Nachher lässt man dergleichen Grundstücke 2. Jahr lang zu brache liegen; da denn nach jedem Zeitlauf von 5. Jahren sich erfindet, daß die Erde besser und minder leicht ist.<sup>33</sup>

The simultaneity of different meanings of *révolution* is particularly evident in the translation of a *Mémoire* by the French physiocrat Mirabeau in the first volume of the journal. The term either occurs with the traditional notion of circularity (*une pure révolution circulaire* or *révolution de siècles*<sup>34</sup>) or designates a radical modification:

Les sciences furent accueillies, & par un concours de circonstances toujours nécessaire aux grandes révolutions, les querelles de religion ayant éveillé dans le même tems la partie la plus sensible de l'esprit humain, tout te monde étudia.<sup>35</sup>

Die Wissenschaften wurden aufgenommen, und durch eine Vereinigung von Umständen, die bey grossen Abänderungen immer nöthig sind, hatten die Religions-Streitigkeiten zugleich den empfindlichsten Theil des menschlichen Geistes erwecket; man studirte durchaus.<sup>36</sup>

In other cases, *révolution* evoked the notion of irreversible change.<sup>37</sup> Moreover, it occasionally tended to be imprecise or vague and needed to be specified or located in a particular context. The authors made use of common collocations, such as *heureuse révolution*<sup>38</sup> or specified the connotation of the term by, for instance, formulating “une révolution subite & imprévue”.<sup>39</sup> Such epithets ensured accurate comprehension and excluded inappropriate meanings. Likewise, reverting to stylistic means such as merisms or hendiadyses was a usual way to convey the ambiguity of the term *révolution*. For instance, in the 1762 foreword, *révolution* is rendered to German via the combination *wechseln und veränderungen*<sup>40</sup> (*shifts and modifications*), two slightly divergent notions.

In mid-eighteenth century, the terms *réforme* and *révolution* often transported converging semantics in French and could both denote a fundamental modification in the sense of the analytical concept of *reform*. The difference between the two meanings is rather gradual, as an article by Vincenz Bernhard Tscharner clearly demonstrates:

Cette considération doit sans doute justifier le desir de donner aux terres de pâture un emploi plus avantageux pour l'homme. Et il paroît qu'on est assez généralement persuadé de la nécessité d'une révolution dans cette partie de la police; cette reforme fait aujourd'hui un des objets particuliers des gouvernemens, qui s'occupent le plus des moyens d'encourager l'agriculture.<sup>41</sup>

Dieser grundsaz der unläugbar ist, wäre schon zureichend, den wunsch von einem nützlicheren gebrauche des weidlandes zu rechtfer-tigen. Auch scheinet die überzeugung von der nothwendigkeit einer verbesserung in diesem stücke fast allgemein worden zu seyn; diese verbesserung ist das augenmerk der regierungen die sich zum meisten mit der aufmunterung des landbaues beschäftigen.<sup>42</sup>

In the French version, *réforme* and *révolution* both apply to the context of public policy and, thereby, refer to traditional discursive patterns. They legitimize reformist activities with their contribution to the common good, a traditional concept frequently invoked in political discourses. It would be misleading to interpret the term *révolution* in Tscharner's text in the sense of a fundamental rupture of the established order. Tscharner embeds this term in the framework of the *police*-concept. Even if its economic dimension is accentuated in the course of the eighteenth century, this concept remains linked to traditional notions of social order,<sup>43</sup> thus emphasizing the conservative and stabilizing character of Tscharner's suggestions.

In the German passage just mentioned, the distinction between the two terms is omitted due to their identical translation with *Verbesserung*

(*improvement*). Likewise, *Aufnehmen* could approach the denoted semantics of improvement:

La marne aussi est sous nos pieds en abondance, mais je dois vous annoncer, Messieurs, que sur ce point là, il y a beaucoup moins d'indocilité, & j'aime à me livrer à cette flateuse idée, que nous touchons au point d'une révolution considérable par rapport à l'agriculture.<sup>44</sup>

Mergel haben wir ebenfalls im überflusse unter unsern füssen. Ich kann ihnen ankünden, meine Herren, daß sich über diesen punkt weniger schwierigkeiten eräugnen; ich freue mich in dem schmeichelnden gedanke, daß wir hiedurch dem zeitpunkte eines beträchtlichen aufnehmens des Akerbaus nahe sind.<sup>45</sup>

*Révolution* translated as *aufnehmen*, relates to the idea of *encouragement* commonly transferred through this term. This quotation, alongside with the examples quoted above, illustrates that the three analyzed terms converge in this particular context and can all align to the common notion of economic *improvement* or *revival*.

At this point, we should note that the number of occurrences of *Aufnahme* and *Aufnehmen* in the German texts is significantly higher than that of *revolution* in the French and *reform* in the German and French texts.<sup>46</sup> This evidence appears all the more remarkable as the semantics of the two German terms denote – much more coherently than *réforme/réformation/Reformation* and *révolution* – a concept of economic encouragement and improvement. Even if the limited statistical validity of the chosen method is taken into account, their frequent occurrence emphasizes the fundamental importance of this established argumentative pattern. In the French texts, *Aufnahme* corresponds to *encouragement*, *progrès*, and *avancement*, whereas the verbal construction *in Aufnahme bringen* is equivalent to *faire fleurir*, *faire prospérer*, *perfectionner*, *encourager*, and *favoriser*. Both varieties occasionally signify *recevoir* or *accueillir*, which corresponds to the dominant dimension of admission and reception in modern usage of the term. Nevertheless, the abstract use is by far more frequent in the sources. In that case, *Aufnahme/Aufnehmen* as a concept comprising change for the better contains both backward and forward temporal dimensions:

Es wäre leicht den anbau dieser gewächse wieder in aufnahm zu bringen; und es ist zu hoffen, die grossen bemühungen zur befördrung der landwirthschaft, werden auch hierinne der nöthigen aufmunterung vielfachen nutzen schaffen.<sup>47</sup>

Il ne seroit pas difficile de rétablir & de faire fleurir la culture du lin & du chanvre, & il y a tout lieu d'espérer que les soins patriotiques

de la Société oeconomique pour la perfection de l'agriculture, ranimera notre zèle & l'émulation qui nous manque, & ouvrira nos yeux sur nos véritables intérêts.<sup>48</sup>

*Wieder in aufnahm bringen* in this context refers to a positive state that existed in the past and should be achieved again. In order to express this ambivalence, the translator made recourse to two distinct expressions in the French text.<sup>49</sup> Several articles allude to this coupling of an idealized past and a present state of decay: “Il ne faut pas espérer que sans une réformation de son état présent, l’industrie parmi nous, se relève de sa décadence.”<sup>50</sup> The description of the deficient present state was used to illustrate the urgency of immediate reformist action, thus plausibly legitimizing the proposals of the *Economic Society*.

The observation of the persistent occurrence of *Aufnahme* and of *in Aufnahme bringen* in the sources becomes even more significant when taking into account how frequently titles, prize questions, and prefaces allude to them. In the revised statutes of the society published in 1762, *Aufnahme* is mentioned in a prominent place:

I. Es soll die Absicht dieser Gesellschaft seyn, den Landbau, den Nahrungsstand und die Handlung, in aufnahme zu bringen. Das ist: den abtrag des landes zu vermehren, die verarbeitung der Landes-waaren zu verbessern, und den vertrieb derselben zu erleichtern. Dieses wird der einige gegenstand ihrer Untersuchungen und Erfahrungen seyn.<sup>51</sup>

In 1763, the Polish duke Mniszech announced the question, “Welches muß der wahre Geist der Gesezgebung seyn, die zum endzweke hat: den Feldbau; und in absicht auf diesen hochwichtigen gegenstand, die Bevölkerung, die Künste, die Manufakturen und die Handlung in aufnahm zu bringen?”<sup>52</sup> It turned out to be one of the society’s most successful prize contests, provoking numerous replies acclaimed by the European agronomist community.<sup>53</sup>

Considering how commonly *Aufnahme* is mentioned in the sources, the importance of this concept for the Economic Enlightenment in Berne is evident. It structured a specific discourse of reform and determined reasoning in the society’s publications. Compared to *reform* and *revolution*, *Aufnahme* displayed a higher significance for the legitimization of agricultural reform projects. When laying out economic and social progress in the journal, authors essentially utilized this term to describe the beneficial effects of reforms.

Besides the inherent logic of reformist discourses, the particular influence of some actors of the Economic Society of Berne should not be underestimated. Society members such as its founder Rudolf Tschiffeli or the renowned savant Albrecht von Haller contributed to the orientation of its actions. In particular, the impetus of Vincenz Bernhard Tscharner, the

society's *chief ideologue*,<sup>54</sup> is considerable. In cooperation with the Yverdon-based publisher Fortunato Bartolomeo de Felice, he was responsible for the publication of the *Mémoires/Abhandlungen* and for the translation of some articles. In addition, he was one of the most prominent authors of the journal who contributed to the publication's success and acceptance among scholars with several forewords and numerous articles.<sup>55</sup> With his awareness for questions of language and rhetoric self-fashioning, he played a key role regarding the reflection of the society's ambitions and methods and its conceptual framework. Tscharner's ideas on language and linguistic change are mentioned in the correspondence with his friend Johann Georg Zimmermann:

Je Suis Surpris qu'on ait pretendu d'avoir trouvé des Gallicismes dans votre Livre. Berne est a mon avis la ville du monde ou on connoit le moins ce que c'est que la langue Allemande, et vous avés plus raison de dire, que cette Langue n'étant point formée encore, il est permis de hazarder de tems en tems des phrases nouvelles, bien entendu pourtant que cette liberté ait plus d'etendue dans la poësie que dans la prose. . . . Il seroit ridicule assurement de vouloir moderniser, mais il n'est point ridicule de se servir d'un terme nouveau si avec un air plus poli il exprime bien ce qu'il doit exprimer.<sup>56</sup>

Tscharner's influence is particularly evident with regard to the conceptualization of *révolution* in the French texts. In Tscharner's articles, *révolution* has a positive and future-oriented connotation, for example, when he is evoking "une heureuse revolution dans les esprits".<sup>57</sup> At the same time, the concept is compatible with historical arguments such as the interpretation of the protestant reformation as an exemplary process of reform:

L'exemple de l'heureuse révolution par laquelle depuis deux siècles, les énormes abus dans le régime de l'église ont été en quelques endroits réformés, devoit, ce semble inspirer aux nations les plus éclairées de l'Europe, le courage d'approfondir les principes reçus dans les diverses parties de l'administration.<sup>58</sup>

Das exemplarische Beispiel der vor zweihundert Jahren, durch Abschaffung der missbräuche in dem Kirchenregimenten, so glücklich vollbrachten Befreiung hätte die Erleuchteter Nationen von Europa aufmuntern sollen, auch die Grundsätze besser zu prüfen, nach welchen andre Theile des gemeinen Wesens verwaltet werden.<sup>59</sup>

In this foreword to the 1767 volume, *révolution* and *réforme* resemble each other in their usage in a context of abolishing abuses. *Révolution* thereby relates to the religious context of the Protestant Reformation. The historical event is presented as an exemplary process of liberation

and change for the better characterized by the abolishment of abuses or grievances. Thus, it was apt to serve as a model for contemporary political action.

In his articles, Tscharner displays a certain consciousness for the ambivalence of meanings. He uses terms in a precise way and in some cases distinguishes between different nuances of meaning:

D'autres auteurs intimidés par un respect excessif, pour les idées reçues, ou trop attachés à leurs intérêts personnels, n'osent manifester les vérités qu'ils sentent & qu'ils voyent. Ils . . . s'efforcent même quelquefois de pallier des contradictions choquantes, de reformer ce qu'il faudroit absolument abolir.<sup>60</sup>

Andre schriftsteller lassen sich durch forcht oder eigennuz abschrecken, ihre einsichten in das feld der wahrheit frey zu offenbaren. Sie bestreben . . . zu verknüpfen, was widersprechend ist; zu verbessern, was gänzlich abgeschafft werden muß.<sup>61</sup>

As seen in previous quotations, *réformer* can refer to both decisively modifying and abolishing useless customs and practices. Tscharner, conscious of the inherent ambiguity of the concept, specifies the intended meaning. The German translation *verbessern* even stresses this dimension and relates to the concept of *reform* in the sense of *improvement* mentioned above.

At this point, we can resume that the three analyzed terms are particularly frequent in texts discussing the role of the Economic Society of Berne on a meta-level and giving account of its activities and projects. They occur repeatedly in the prefaces and in programmatic texts such as articles of members of the society. Again, Tscharner holds a prominent position as the author of a significant number of programmatic articles. In these texts, the roles, intentions, aspirations, and self-conception of the society are reflected; the frequent use of ideologically charged terms is therefore hardly surprising. The use of the three terms and of their respective conceptual framework thus proves their relevance as semantical nodes of the Bernese Economic Enlightenment discourse.

#### 4. Conclusion

All terms analyzed referred to complex concepts and had ambiguous notions. In some cases, they could only be rendered to French or German by using two distinct words. The various modes of translation of each term therefore help to explore their historical understanding and the ways of referring to concepts in two different languages. Taken as a whole, the ambivalence of usage and of referenced contexts is doubtlessly a pivotal feature of modes of conceptualization in the society's use of language.

The reluctant adaption of the terms *réforme* and *révolution* in the German texts of the journal may result from the existence of the established term *Aufnahme* that provided a precise description of the idea of a general economic improvement. In the French articles, *réformel/réformation* and especially *révolution* lacked that specific and coherent denotation and referred to a variety of contexts, which affected their possible use as a guiding concept of (reformist) political action. The connotations of the terms analyzed referred to traditional as well as innovative concepts. While some notions were dynamic and oriented towards the future, others still evoked established modes of legitimating political action. These findings can hardly be integrated into a consistent narrative of progress.

However, this ambiguity offered communicative options to the authors. Unspecific or even versatile terms could easily be inserted into different discourses and apply to divergent objectives. *Révolution*, for instance, was very vague and related to different contexts. Writers mentioning this term were able to use its indeterminacy in order to simultaneously refer to distinct concepts. In this regard, the impact of some of the actors needs to be emphasized. Authors and translators such as Vincenz Bernhard Tscharner displayed raised awareness of the importance of language in general and of the complexity of meaning in particular. They influenced the usage of certain terms and the conceptual alignment of discourses, thus contributing to the development of languages of agricultural and economic reform in eighteenth-century Berne.

*Aufnahme* provided the advantage of relating to traditional ideas of social order and public policy. Alluding to this concept allowed for the embedding of innovational projects of reform in an established framework. Yet, its restriction to German-language use was unfavorable for a continuing utilization as interlingually adaptable concepts like *reform* and *revolution* evolved. The semantic change of the *Sattelzeit* – and fundamental political developments – favored those cross-language concepts and contributed to their specification. By contrast, concepts restricted to one language were more likely to fade if rivaling concepts were available and easier to integrate into new political discourses. As orientation towards the future became more and more important, the retrospective dimension of *Aufnahme* was no longer an advantage. In the journal of the Economic Society of Berne, however, the concept of *Aufnahme* played an important role. The society of Berne's conceptual framework comprised *reform* and *revolution* as well as *Aufnahme*. Society members used the slightly different notions of these concepts in order to address both traditional and progressive values, thus increasing the acceptance of projects of reform among a heterogeneous audience.

## Notes

1. See N. Furrer, *Die vierzigsprachige Schweiz: Sprachkontakte und Mehrsprachigkeit in der vorindustriellen Gesellschaft (15.–19. Jahrhundert)*, Vol. 1 (Zürich: Chronos, 2002).
2. See D. Tosato-Rigo, “Waadt: Bevölkerung und Siedlung”, in *Historisches Lexikon der Schweiz* (May 2015). [www.hls-dhs-dss.ch/textes/d/D7395.php](http://www.hls-dhs-dss.ch/textes/d/D7395.php).
3. For an overview of the history of economic societies, see R. van Dülmen, *Die Gesellschaft der Aufklärer: Zur bürgerlichen Emanzipation und aufklärerischen Kultur in Deutschland* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1986); H.E. Lowood, “Patriotism, Profit, and the Promotion of Science in the German Enlightenment: The Economic and Scientific Societies, 1760–1815” (Ph.D. dissertation, University of California, Berkeley, 1987); R. Schlägl, “Die patriotisch-gemeinnützigen Gesellschaften: Organisation, Sozialstruktur, Tätigkeitsfelder”, in *Aufklärungsgesellschaften*, ed. H. Reinalter (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1993), 61–81.
4. C. Bäschlin, *Die Blütezeit der Ökonomischen Gesellschaft in Bern 1759–1766* (Laupen: Haggenmacher, 1917); E. Erne, “Bern: Ökonomische Gesellschaft, seit 1759”, in *Die Schweizerischen Sozietäten: Lexikalische Darstellung der Reformgesellschaften des 18. Jahrhunderts in der Schweiz*, ed. E. Erne (Zürich: Chronos, 1988), 188–204; G. Gerber-Visser, *Die Ressourcen des Landes: Der ökonomisch-patriotische Blick in den Topographischen Beschreibungen der Oekonomischen Gesellschaft Bern 1759–1855* (Baden: Hier+Jetzt, 2012); A. Holenstein, M. Stuber, and G. Gerber-Visser, eds., *Nützliche Wissenschaft und Ökonomie im Ancien Régime, Akteure, Themen, Kommunikationsformen* (Heidelberg: Palatina, 2007); D. Salzmann, *Dynamik und Krise des ökonomischen Patriotismus: Das Tätigkeitsprofil der Oekonomischen Gesellschaft Bern 1759–1797* (Nordhausen: Bautz, 2009); M. Stuber, et al., eds., *Kartoffeln, Klee und kluge Köpfe: Die Oekonomische und Gemeinnützige Gesellschaft des Kantons Bern OGG (1759–2009)* (Bern: Haupt, 2009); M. Stuber, “‘dass gemeinnützige Wahrheiten gemein gemacht werden’: Zur Publikationstätigkeit der Oekonomischen Gesellschaft Bern 1759–1798”, in *Landschaften agrarisch-ökonomischen Wissens: Strategien innovativer Ressourcennutzung in Zeitschriften und Sozietäten des 18. Jahrhunderts*, ed. M. Popplow (Münster: Waxmann, 2010), 121–153; M. Stuber, “Die Oekonomische Gesellschaft Bern als Kontaktzone im europäischen Austausch agrarisch-ökonomischen Wissens”, in *Grenzen und Kontaktzonen: Rekonfigurationen von Wissensräumen zwischen Frankreich und den deutschen Ländern 1700–1850: Erster ‘‘Euroscientia’’-Workshop, 15./16.09.2011*, ed. R. Dauser and L. Schilling (Paris: perspectivia.net, 2012). [www.perspectivia.net/publikationen/discussions/7-2012](http://www.perspectivia.net/publikationen/discussions/7-2012); R. Wyss, *Pfarrer als Vermittler ökonomischen Wissens? Die Rolle der Pfarrer in der Ökonomischen Gesellschaft Bern im 18. Jahrhundert* (Nordhausen: Bautz, 2007).
5. Cf. the only exception: E. Honegger von Rüti, *Ideengeschichte der Bernischen Nationalökonomie im 18. Jahrhundert* (Ph.D. dissertation, Universität Bern, 1922). However, this thesis supposes consistent systems of ideas without giving a satisfactory analysis of contexts and discursive patterns in the language usage.
6. See Stuber, “dass gemeinnützige Wahrheiten”, 121–153.
7. “Einladung an alle Schweizerische Wirthschafter”, in *Monatliche Nachrichten einicher Merkwürdigkeiten, in Zürich gesammlet und herausgegeben, vom Jahre MDCCCLIX* (Zürich, 1760), 25–28; *Excerptum totius Italicae*

- nec non Helveticae literaturae pro anno MDCCCLIX, Tomus I.: Januarius, Februarius, Martius* (Bern, 1759); “Société formée à Berne, pour encourager l’Agriculture & l’Oeconomie”, *Journal Helvétique ou Recueil de pièces fugitives de Literature choisie . . .* (Janvier 1759): 89–98.
8. The first two volumes were published under different titles: *Recueil de mémoires, concernants l’oeconomie rurale par une société établie à Berne* in French and *Sammlungen von landwirtschaftlichen Dingen der Schweizerischen Gesellschaft in Bern* in German. The French journal was only published until 1773, whereas the German version was occasionally continued until 1798. The later German volumes do not make part of this enquiry. To facilitate the following analysis, “Mémoires” and “Abhandlungen” are respectively used as abbreviations and refer to all 14 volumes between 1760 and 1773.
  9. “Avertissement”, *Recueil* 1, no. 1 (1760): 3–4.
  10. For the analytical concept of *Economic Enlightenment*, see M. Popplow, “Die Ökonomische Aufklärung als Innovationskultur des 18. Jahrhunderts zur optimierten Nutzung natürlicher Ressourcen”, in Popplow, *Landschaften*, 3–48.
  11. See on *Gemeiner Nutz* as an *affirmative category*: R. von Friedeburg, “Der ‘Gemeine Nutz’ als affirmative Kategorie”, *Zeitschrift des Vereins für hessische Geschichte und Landeskunde* 89 (1982–1983): 27–49; T. Simon, “Gemeinwohltopik in der mittelalterlichen und frühneuzeitlichen Politiktheorie”, in *Gemeinwohl und Gemeinsinn: Historische Semantiken politischer Leitbegriffe*, ed. H. Münker and H. Bluhm (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 2001), 129–146; on the antique and medieval foundations of the concept: P. Hibst, *Utilitas Publica – Gemeiner Nutz – Gemeinwohl: Untersuchungen zur Idee eines politischen Leitbegriffs von der Antike bis zum späten Mittelalter* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1991).
  12. On the analytical concept of *contact zone* see: M.L. Pratt, “Arts of the Contact Zone”, *Profession* (1991): 33–40. [www.jstor.org/stable/25595469](http://www.jstor.org/stable/25595469); Dauser and Schilling, *Grenzen und Kontaktzonen*, passim.
  13. The typographic societies of Bern, Lausanne, and Neuchâtel were famous for reprints and translations and cooperated to a certain extent by concentrating on divergent geographical and linguistic spheres. See S. Bösiger, “Aufklärung als Geschäft: Die Typographische Gesellschaft Bern”, *Berner Zeitschrift für Geschichte* 73, no. 1 (2011): 15; S. Corsini, “Un pour tous . . . et chacun pour soi? Petite histoire d’une alliance entre les Sociétés typographiques de Lausanne, Berne et Neuchâtel”, in *Le rayonnement d’une maison d’édition dans l’Europe des Lumières: la Société typographique de Neuchâtel 1769–1789 . . .*, ed. R. Darnton and M. Schlup (Neuchâtel: Bibliothèque publique et universitaire de Neuchâtel, 2005), 115–137.
  14. See Bösiger, *Aufklärung*, 11–12, 28.
  15. Before, the journal had been published by Heidegger in Zurich. See Bösiger, *Aufklärung*, 10.
  16. P. Burke has investigated early modern cultures of translation: “Cultures of Translation in Early Modern Europe”, in *Cultural Translation in Early Modern Europe*, ed. P. Burke and R. Po-Chia Hsia (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 7–38; P. Burke, “Lost (and Found) in Translation: A Cultural History of Translators and Translating in Early Modern Europe”, *European Review* 15 (2007): 83–94.
  17. Letter from Tscharner to Zimmermann, 5 February 1758; Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz Bibliothek, Hannover, MS\_XLII\_1933\_All\_97, 57v.; English

- translation: E. Stoye, “*Vincent Bernard de Tscharner, 1728–1778*” (Ph.D. dissertation, Université de Fribourg, 1954), 148.
18. See F. Venturi, *Utopia and Reform in the Enlightenment* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971); C. Dipper, “Réforme”, in *Handbuch politisch-sozialer Grundbegriffe in Frankreich 1680–1820*, ed. R. Reichardt and H.-J. Lüsebrink (München: Oldenbourg, 2000), 19-20:115–138; U. Im Hof, “Geleitwort: Zur Rolle der Sozietäten im 18. Jahrhundert zwischen Utopie, Aufklärung und Reform”, in Erne, *Sozietäten*, 11–14; H. Mohnhaupt, ed., *Revolution, Reform, Restauration: Formen der Veränderung von Recht und Gesellschaft* (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 1988); R. Reichardt, *Reform und Revolution bei Condorcet: Ein Beitrag zur Späten Aufklärung in Frankreich* (Bonn: Ludwig Röhrscheid, 1973); L. Schilling, “Reform”, in *Enzyklopädie der Neuzeit*, ed. Friedrich Jaeger (Stuttgart: J.B. Metzler, 2009), 10:777–785; E. Wolgast, “Reform, Reformation”, in *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe: Historisches Lexikon zur politisch-sozialen Sprache in Deutschland*, ed. O. Brunner, W. Conze, and R. Koselleck (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1984), 5:313–360.
  19. For the history of the concept of *reform* see R. Koselleck, “Revolution, Rebellion, Aufruhr, Bürgerkrieg: IV: Von der Frühen Neuzeit bis zur Französischen Revolution”, in *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe*, 5:689–725; Reichardt, *Reform und Revolution*, passim.
  20. There is no entry for this concept in *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe* and similar encyclopedias or dictionaries. The present research is based on historical dictionaries in order to examine premodern meanings of the term.
  21. “A continuous progress to a more and more flourishing state of an object” (our translation). J.H. Zedler, ed., “Aufnehmen einer Sache”, in *Grosses vollständiges Universal-Lexicon Aller Wissenschaften und Künste, Welche bißhero durch menschlichen Verstand und Witz erfunden und verbessert worden*, ed. J.H. Zedler (Leipzig, 1751), 2:803. Cf. an earlier, very similar article: G.H. Zincke, “Aufnehmen der Handwercker und Manufacturen”, in *Teutsches Real-Manufacturen- und Handwercker-Lexicon* (Leipzig, 1745), 1:110.
  22. R. Koselleck, “Einleitung”, in *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe: Historisches Lexikon zur politisch-sozialen Sprache in Deutschland*, ed. O. Brunner, W. Conze, and R. Koselleck (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1972), 1:13.
  23. For the *Abhandlungen* see [www.e-periodica.ch/digbib/vollist?UID=oeg-002](http://www.e-periodica.ch/digbib/vollist?UID=oeg-002); for the *Mémoires*. [www.e-periodica.ch/digbib/vollist?UID=soe-001](http://www.e-periodica.ch/digbib/vollist?UID=soe-001).
  24. In addition, the text recognition could not handle word breaks.
  25. Different variations or combinations of syllables (such as *aufnahm-* and *aufnehm-* or *revol-* and *-volu-*) were used to take account of the incoherent spelling of terms and to augment the validity of the statistic survey.
  26. Different derivatives of *reformatio* occur in the sources: *Reformation/reformiert/Reformator* in German. The French journal shows greater variation and a significantly higher number of occurrences: *réformel/réformer/réformation/réformateur/réformable*.
  27. “Extraits de plusieurs pieces qui ont concouru au prix indiqué pour l’année 1763: Par ordre de la Société oeconomique de Berne sur cette question, Quelle est la meilleure méthode pour l’éducation des habitans de la campagne, relativement à l’agriculture. Rédigés par B.T.”, *Mémoires* 7, no. 2 (1766): 39; “Nachlese aus verschiedenen Wettschriften, über die für 1763: ausgeschriebene Preisfrage: Von der besten Auferziehung des Landvolks in Absicht auf den Feldbau (zusammengetragen durch B.T.)”, *Abhandlungen* 7, no. 2 (1766): 40.

28. Co-occurrences of *réformer les abus* and *réformer les vices*, and, to a lesser extent, of *réformer* and *abolir les pâturages* as well as of *réformer* and *abolir les parcours*, were frequent (see for instance: B. Tscharner, “Examen de divers doutes qu’on oppose à la réduction ou abolition des paquiers communs”, *Mémoires* 10, no. 2 (1769): 132–133).
29. J.L. Muret, “Mémoire sur l’état de la population dans le Pays de Vaud”, *Mémoires* 7, no. 1 (1766); J.L. Muret, “Abhandlung über die Bevölkerung der Waat”, *Abhandlungen* 7, no. 1 (1766).
30. “Great Necessity of Reform” (our translation). J.L. Muret, “Mémoire”, *Mémoires* 7, no. 1 (1766): 95, 105. In both cases, *réforme* is translated as *Verbesserungen* (see Muret, “Abhandlung über die Bevölkerung der Waat”, 101, 112).
31. B. Tscharner, “Topographische und ökonomische Beschreibungen: Von dem Münsterthale”, *Abhandlungen* 3, no. 4 (1762): 161.
32. “Mémoire sur la culture du lin: Extrait libre des essais de la société de Dublin”, *Recueil* 1, no. 1 (1760): 165.
33. R. Tschiffeli, “Anleitung zu dem Flachsbau: Ein freyer Auszug aus den Dublinischen Abhandlungen”, *Sammlungen* 1, no. 1 (1760): 180.
34. V. Riqueti Marquis de Mirabeau, “Mémoire pour concourir au prix annoncé et proposé par la très louable Société d’agriculture à Berne pour l’année 1759”, *Recueil* 1, no. 2 (1760): 258, 270. The expressions are translated as *Kreislauf* and *Reyhe von Jahrhunderten* in the German equivalent. “Abhandlung über die Preisfrage der Oeconomischen Gesellschaft in Bern auf das Jahr 1759: Aus dem Französischen des Herrn Marquis von Mirabeau übersetzt”, *Sammlungen* 1, no. 2 (1760): 282, 295.
35. Mirabeau, *Mémoire*, 228.
36. Mirabeau, *Abhandlung*, 148–149.
37. The term *révolution* was, for instance, used in a topographic description in order to denote an abrupt natural phenomenon that shaped the physical form of mountains: “une montagne fendue de sa cime jusqu’à la racine, par une de ces révolutions physiques, dont on trouve tant de traces sur notre globe, & particulièrement dans les montagnes.” The German equivalent is *Veränderungen*. B. Tscharner, “Descriptions topographiques et oeconomiques: de la Prévôté de Moutier Grandval”, *Mémoires* 3, no. 4 (1762): 316; B. Tscharner, “Topographische und ökonomische Bechreibungen: Von dem Münsterthale”, *Abhandlungen* 3, no. 4 (1762): 157–158.
38. Cf. f.i. “Préface”, *Mémoires* 8, no. 1 (1767): VI.
39. “A Sudden and Unexpected Change” (our translation). “Essai sur la question: quel est le prix du bled dans le Canton de Berne”, *Mémoires* 8, no. 1 (1767): 99.
40. “Vorrede”, *Abhandlungen* 3, no. 1 (1762): II-III. See “Préface”, *Mémoires* 3, no. 1 (1762): IV.
41. Tscharner, “Examen de divers doutes”, 99.
42. B. Tscharner, “Prüfung einicher Zweifel wider die Einschränkung oder Vertheilung der Allmenten”, *Abhandlungen* 9, no. 2 (1768): 185.
43. See F.-L. Knemeyer, “Polizei”, in *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe: Historisches Lexikon zur politisch-sozialen Sprache in Deutschland*, ed. O. Brunner, W. Conze, and R. Koselleck (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1978), 4:875–897; H. Maier, *Die ältere deutsche Staats- und Verwaltungslehre*, 2nd ed. (Munich: dtv, 1980); M. Raeff, *The Well-Ordered Police State: Social and Institutional Change Through Law in the Germanies and Russia, 1660–1800* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1983); A. Holenstein, “Die Ordnung und die Mißbräuche: Gute Policey als Institution und Ereignis”, in *Institutionen und Ereignis: Über historische Praktiken und Vorstellungen*

- gesellschaftlichen Ordnens*, ed. R. Blänkner and B. Jussen (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck, 1998), 253–273; A. Iseli, *Gute Policey: Öffentliche Ordnung in der Frühen Neuzeit* (Stuttgart: Ulmer, 2009); P. Napoli, *Naissance de la police moderne: Pouvoir, normes, société* (Paris: La Découverte, 2003); K. Härter, “Polizei”, in *Enzyklopädie der Neuzeit*, ed. F. Jaeger (Stuttgart: J.B. Metzler, 2009), 10:170–180.
44. J.L. Muret, “Lettre sur l’agriculture perfectionnée”, *Mémoires* 3, no. 1 (1762): 167.
  45. J.L. Muret, “Schreiben von den folgen des zur vollkommenheit gebrachten Akerbaues”, *Abhandlungen* 3, no. 1 (1762): 171.
  46. *Reform* and its variants occur in 33 articles; *revolution* in 29. In contrast *Aufnahme* is mentioned in 80 articles and *Aufnehmen* in 35.
  47. J.R. Wydler, “Nachricht von dem zustande der Handlung und Künste im untern Aargäu”, *Abhandlungen* 5, no. 1 (1764): 41.
  48. “Mémoire sur l’etat du commerce et des arts”, *Mémoires* 5, no. 1 (1764): 50.
  49. The German surname of the author and grammatical mistakes (*ranimera* instead of ‘*ranimeront*’ and *ouvrira* instead of *ouvrirront*) suggest that the original text was drafted in German.
  50. “We should not hope that without any reform of its present state the industry among us rises again from its decadence” (our translation). “Préface”, *Mémoires* 5, no. 1 (1764): VII.
  51. “Geseze der Oekonomischen Gesellschaft zu Bern”, *Abhandlungen* 3, no. 1 (1762): XLIII.
  52. Graf von Mniszech, “Ankündung”, *Abhandlungen* 4, no. 4 (1763): 213.
  53. See B. Kapossy, “Bern und das Europa der Aufklärung”, in *Berns goldene Zeit: Das 18. Jahrhundert neu entdeckt*, ed. André Holenstein (Bern: Stämpfli, 2008), 402.
  54. B. Kapossy, *Iselin contra Rousseau Sociable Patriotism and the History of Mankind* (Basel: Schwabe, 2006), 133.
  55. Tscharner’s authorship is proved for the forewords of the volumes 1762–1764. The correspondence of his brother and secretary of the society, Nikolas Emmanuel Tscharner, indicates that he also wrote the forewords of the other volumes. “Verzeichniß der Verfasser”, *Abhandlungen* 5, no. 4 (1764); see G. Tobler, *Neujahrs-Blatt der Litterarischen Gesellschaft Bern auf das Jahr 1896: Vincenz Bernhard Tscharner (1728–1778)* (Bern: K.J. Wyss, 1895), 42, 59.
  56. R. Hamel, ed., *Briefe von J.G. von Zimmermann, Wieland und A. von Haller an Vincenz Bernhard von Tscharner* (Rostock: Werther, 1881), 21. The precedent letter by Tscharner himself is not edited.
  57. B. Tscharner, “Extrait de plusieurs pieces qui ont concouru au prix indiqué pour l’année 1763”, *Mémoires* 7, no. 2 (1766): 47.
  58. “Préface”, *Mémoires* 8, no. 1 (1767): VI.
  59. “Vorrede”, *Abhandlungen* 8, no. 1 (1767): VI.
  60. “Préface”, *Mémoires* 8, no. 1 (1767–1771): VIII–IX.
  61. “Vorrede”, *Abhandlungen* 8, no. 1 (1767): VIII.

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*Excerptum totius Italicae nec non Helveticae literaturae pro anno MDCCCLIX,*  
*Tomus I.: Januarius, Februarius, Martius.* Bern, 1759.

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## Section II

# Strategies and Rhetoric of Reform



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## 5 Change and Improvement to Save the State

### Administrative Reforms in Maria Theresian Austria

*Gregor Stiebert*

#### Introduction

After the death of Empress Maria Theresia (1717–1780), the Austrian political scientist and professor at Vienna University, Joseph von Sonnenfels (1732–1817), praised the reign of Maria Theresia as a time of great improvement for the state. According to Sonnenfels, the Austrian state was devastated and about to extinct at the time Maria Theresia ascended the throne. Yet forty years later she was able to hand over a prosperous state to her son that – with regard to the status quo ante – had been improved or was now ready for further improvement (“in wesentlichen Theilen der inneren Verfassung verbessert [und] zu den übrigen Verbesserungen vorbereitet”<sup>1</sup>). She could therefore reasonably be identified as the restorer of the monarchy by her contemporaries (“Wiederherstellerin der Oesterreichischen Monarchie”<sup>2</sup>). This illustrates the ambivalent contemporary understanding of her reforms on one hand as a project of improvement not only for the present time but also for the future. On the other hand, the reforms restore the monarchy, bringing it back to an ideal static state that lies in the past. In contrast, twentieth-century historians like the Italian Franco Venturi (1914–1994), who did research on reform in Italian states in the Age of Enlightenment, underlined the innovative character of her changes in administration via describing Maria Theresia’s rule as “a new kind of politics . . . [rather] than a coherent program of reform”<sup>3</sup> which changed the relationship between throne and subjects. Other modern historians go even further and assess her programme of ruling as a revolutionary one (“Revolution im Regierungssystem”<sup>4</sup>).

These three opinions highlight the heterogeneous evaluation of the rule of Maria Theresia and her reforms by both contemporaries and modern historiography. The reason for this may be found in the structure of the reforms, which were more than the implementation of one single change in administration. Following the ideal way of implementing reforms in the Early Modern state, it was the monarch who had the ultimate say – he or she was the one who constructed the whole state system with the help of his or her ministers. Despite being the guiding spirit behind the reforms,

Maria Theresia was not an absolute ruler of one single state. Instead, she reigned over a conglomerate of differently organised states: She was, amongst others, Queen of Hungary, Croatia and Slavonia, Bohemia, and Archduchess of Austria. Therefore, the countries of the Habsburg dynasty can best be described as a composite monarchy.<sup>5</sup> The time of her reign was marked by structural reforms of the administration leading to a more centralised state and differentiated administrative institutions. It was during that period that separate institutions for finance (*Directorium in Publicis et Cameralibus*), justice (*Oberste Justizbehörde*) and foreign policy (*Staatskanzley*) were formed. These changes in the practice of administration under Maria Theresia have often been the subject of historical scholarship. The older historiography particularly praised her role as a mother of her people (*Landesmutter*) and saviour of the monarchy,<sup>6</sup> while more modern historiography dealt with the time of the co-regency, when she was ruling together with her son, Joseph II (1741–1790). That time is often perceived as a reform era under the label of *Josephinism*.<sup>7</sup> Nevertheless, these changes can rather be described as attempts to find solutions to contemporary problems than an intentional centralisation to create a new model of state.<sup>8</sup>

To prove this assertion I will analyse the reforms of the Austrian state during the rule of Maria Theresia from the 1740s until the end of the Seven Years' War in 1763. Therefore, my main interest lies firstly in analysing the contemporary patterns of argument used by the protagonists of the reform processes in order to conceptualise the roots and reasons of change and, secondly, the very concepts behind the aforementioned patterns. The early years of Maria Theresia's rule are particularly appropriate for this purpose as they can be interpreted as a sort of a take-off phase for further change in Austria. Therefore, I want to scrutinise the implementation of these changes from several perspectives orienting on Farr's model on change and re-change. Firstly, I will take a closer look at the proceeding of the reform debates at the Habsburgian court investigating protocols and written presentations of the ministers. Secondly, I will examine the opinions of contemporary witnesses who were influenced by the reform. Thirdly, the writings of Maria Theresia herself will be part of the analysis. The argumentation coming from those three kinds of sources will be combined with contemporary writing of political science to give a comprehensive understanding of the very ideas that influenced the reforms. Furthermore, this will enable us to understand the motivation underlying this change of the state at that time and allows us to get a more complete idea of the contemporary comprehension of change. The structure of my chapter will follow the chronological process of the reforms. I will commence by describing the unfolding of the reforms of 1748/49 (part 2) and the preliminary steps towards it (part 1) resulting from the crisis of the Austrian state during the 1740s. In a second step, I will analyse the contemporary understanding of change in writings of

Maria Theresia (part 3) and in contemporary political (part 4) science close to the Austria court. In the last part of my chapter, I will analyse the redress of the reform in 1761.

During the fifteen-year period of analysis relevant here, the reform measures were planned, implemented, and re-changed. In that context, my understanding of reform refers to a process of change that should find solutions for contemporary problems and needs.<sup>9</sup> It can be described with a model of James Farr, who understands change in political concepts as a re-construction of political practices due to contemporary problems. The permanent search for solutions to challenges therefore leads to the innovation of political concepts. This especially applies to a time of crisis. In these periods, the contradictions between old concepts and the problems to which they are supposed to reply become more evident. This process integrates political actors – not only the monarch and their ministers but also contemporary scholars and theorists. On the way to implement reforms the original idea may be changed, discussed, and criticised, which all together may lead to further change.<sup>10</sup>

Modern research proposes that this change of administrative practices is accompanied by a particular language.<sup>11</sup> Language in this context is perceived as a set of argumentation using specific terms. It is a strategic skill used either to push the new ideas of administration, based on rational thinking and oriented on future needs, or to express dissent to the reforms, hence to maintain the traditional order. Thus the language also reflects a particular understanding of state on which the reform and its implementation were based.<sup>12</sup> Analysing reforms on a language level thus helps to provide a better understanding of the theoretical foundations on which they were based. Therefore, I want to analyse the language used during the reform process mentioned previously. I will look for contemporary descriptions for the changes in administration which are called *reform* by modern historians. Furthermore, I want to analyse the particular pattern of argumentation. If the assertion of a particular language of reform is true, there must be also a change in the language of those reforms.

## **1. From crisis of the Austrian Monarchy to Preliminary Reforms**

During the first four decades of the eighteenth century, the Austrian monarchy can hardly be described as an absolute one. Although being emperors of the Holy Roman Empire, Habsburg princes strongly depended on the territorial estates in their own states and were thus just acting as protectors over these intermediate local authorities.<sup>13</sup> This changed with the very beginning of Maria Theresia's reign in 1740. The Austrian empress showed that she was willing to focus her power in a more central organisation in order “to recast the fiscal system so as to permit the deployment

of greater military power, defensive and offensive.”<sup>14</sup> Although this was embedded in the greater framework of a European trend of concentrating central authority, these reforms “were to a large extent less the deliberate and far-sighted assertion of fundamental principles of government than desperate expedients provoked by the justified fear of total political collapse.”<sup>15</sup> The reason for this fear lay in the nearly fatal situation of the finances after the loss of large parts of Silesia, which was seized by Frederick II of Prussia. After the surprising death of her father Charles VI, Maria Theresia had to fight for her succession and the survival of Habsburg Austria, as nearly all states around her did not recognise her hereditary titles.

In 1742, she created the State Chancellery (Staatskanzlei) as the new central institution to deal with foreign policy. Nevertheless, the central administration was still not well developed mainly due to one reason: the mere lack of money. This may likewise be illustrated by the example of the Aulic War Council in Vienna (Hofkriegsrat, already established in 1556), an institution that was supposed to manage military issues in a central way.<sup>16</sup> Though in theory being able to organise the military, its weak point was its chronic and severe lack of money. Although the Court Chamber (Hofkammer), the Wiener Stadtbanco, and the Universal Bankität were actually in charge of a central financial administration particularly focused on covering the debts of the monarchy, the payment of taxes was taken care by the estates and organised by the local chancelleries for Austria, Bohemia, Hungary, and Transylvania. As the military became a central institution of the monarchy, the crown increasingly depended on the financial support of and assistance from the estates.<sup>17</sup>

The loss of the biggest parts of Silesia in the War of the Austrian Succession in 1742 offered an opportunity to change this dependence. With half of Silesia being conquered by Prussia, the territorial loss was echoed by a sharp decrease of the Contribution, which indeed shrank to half of the pre-war amount.<sup>18</sup> This also caused the growth of debts that Austria tried to compensate with foreign subsidies from England and the Netherlands, which could pay 21% of military outlay.<sup>19</sup> This situation was unsustainable for a longer period. Consequently, the Austrian state had to find new ways to increase military income, define and service royal and provincial debts, regulate the economy of the Court, and reform the dilapidated finances of the Länder.<sup>20</sup> To that end, Friedrich Wilhelm von Haugwitz (1702–1765), already working in the administration in Silesia and negotiating the Contribution with the estates, became president of the newly created royal office in Troppau, the capital of the rest of Silesia. With the creation of that office, Silesia became a model for the following state reform of 1748/49. The establishment of the royal office was a measure to strengthen the influence of royal power in Silesia administering financial issues directly from central institutions in Vienna via a subaltern institution headed by a loyal officer.

Haugwitz was the right person to reform the state, as he never belonged to the established circles of the Austrian administration or the court in the run-up to his assumption of office.<sup>21</sup> Instead, he was an expert in both Silesia and administration: He was a member of the provincial administration from 1725 on and a follower of the Cameralist ideas of Wilhelm von Schröder (1640–1688) and his attitude against the territorial estates.<sup>22</sup> In 1743, Haugwitz submitted a draft for a central administration of Silesia's finances to Maria Theresia and suggested that money from taxes should be collected by a central authority, thereby recommending that the estates in Silesia should no longer take care of the administration of the taxes. Moreover, they should be forced to pay a higher Contribution for that administrative work, yet maintain jurisdictional power. This change led indeed to the novelty of a sharp separation between financial and legal administration.

In 1743, Haugwitz revealed detailed insights into that plan by means of two memoranda that he presented to Maria Theresia.<sup>23</sup> Within them, he suggests setting up a completely new *Contributionssystema*. The choice of these particular words was not left to chance. In fact the meaning of the idea to create this kind of system already suggests the background of the reform. The creation of this systematic entity reflects the fact that the collection of the Contribution should follow certain rational and comprehensible rules and be established in logical way.<sup>24</sup> Therefore, in order to bring changes in the state the monarch had unquestionably to be informed about the current state. Only then might he or she be convinced of the arguments. For the first time, the ideas of how to reform the Austrian state did not result from a backward look to restore an old state. Haugwitz's reform rather followed a mechanical image of the state that worked in a systematic way following particular rules. It just needed to be adjusted in the right way to take care of the common good. The sources of potential reforms of the state were, therefore, verifiable. In his argumentation, Haugwitz uses the example of the Prussian tax system in occupied Silesia and compares it to the old Austrian one.<sup>25</sup> Prussia was considered more as a model for an efficient ruling of a state than a mere enemy.<sup>26</sup> Furthermore, the draft also analyses undesirable developments that had led to the current problems. Haugwitz presented several examples of the estates only acting for their self-interest since 1527, the year when Silesia became a Habsburg territory.<sup>27</sup> The failures of the estates had brought confusion ("unordnung und confusion"<sup>28</sup>) to the state. Thus, according to Haugwitz, good order ("gute Ordnung"<sup>29</sup>) could be restored by following the Prussian model. This would, following Haugwitz's argumentation, improve the situation in Silesia ("auf besseren fuss"<sup>30</sup>).

These considerations led to a subordination of the Contribution under the crown's direct administration. As a logical consequence, this also caused a separation of the financial from the judicial administration. The

estates in Silesia, which had been responsible for both finance and justice, now lost part of their obligation. In the commission letter that Maria Theresia issued to implement the reform, she justified that measure to the estates with the high workflow they would have to face. The separation of finance and justice should therefore serve as relief for the estates. Her argumentation thus followed a quite pragmatic line of reasoning.<sup>31</sup>

After the successful implementation of the new tax system in Silesia, Haugwitz also favoured applying this safe and good model (“sicher[es] und gute[s] model”<sup>32</sup>) in other states of the Habsburg monarchy. Maria Theresia instructed Haugwitz to apply this very system to Krain und Kärnten in 1746 using the same pattern of argument that he had used previously in the Silesian case. Thereby, it was not merely the goal of the reform in Silesia that was adopted but also the way in which it should be installed. Firstly, Haugwitz should gather an overview of the administrative structure in that part of the monarchy (“ambtsweesen genuist erhoben”<sup>33</sup>) and, secondly, he should bring the administration of these areas into perfect order (“beste ordnung”<sup>34</sup>). Hence, the reforming of the administration is also perceived by Maria Theresia as a two-step process that consisted of the gathering of information and finally changing the structures of administration. The establishment of the reform finally took place in 1747 with the creation of a fiscal administration (“Cameral-, Commercial- und politische Repräsentationen”), also directly subordinated to the court in Vienna. As it happened in Silesia before, it was solely the responsibility for jurisdiction that remained with the estates.<sup>35</sup>

In summarising the first reforms of Haugwitz in certain states of the Habsburg monarchy, one becomes aware of the fact that the change was communicated in a positive way: It should result into an improvement of the administration leading to a more efficient practice. Improvement can only be achieved in contrast to a problematic current state. Therefore, it was important to gather knowledge of the current state in the first step of the path leading to change. This knowledge consisted of identifying the problems triggering the necessity to initiate the remodelling of the state – or particular parts of it. The monarch, the initiator of every change process, could not decide without being perfectly informed. She first needed to be informed before she could be convinced with rational arguments giving reason to change. In the second step, the proposed changes could finally be established. The fact that Maria Theresia adopted this scheme in her instruction to Haugwitz proves that this practice became the leading model of change.

## 2. The State Reform of 1748/49

The success of the reforms in Silesia, Krain, and Kärnten made it possible to draft a reform plan for the other parts of Austria. It aimed at establishing a *Haubtsystem* that should enable the state to maintain a standing

army of 108,000 soldiers. In contrast to the smaller reforms Haugwitz had previously administrated, the reform of 1748/49 was more extensive and, therefore, combined a reform of administrative practices with a reform of the very constitution of the state itself. It was carried out in steps following the scheme already presented previously: the gathering of information followed by the implementation of change. In his draft from December 1747,<sup>36</sup> Haugwitz presented Maria Theresia the idea of establishing (“errichtung”<sup>37</sup>) a *Cameral- und Militärsystema* to find out how much money would be needed to finance the army. He then outlined the principles in accordance with how the system should be structured: the preservation of the country and the establishment of a remedy (“äußerste . . . gegenwehrmittel”<sup>38</sup>) for keeping the country safe. In moments of extreme danger (“äußerste noth”<sup>39</sup>) – and this description applied to the years 1747/48 – Haugwitz believed it to be both necessary and rational to change some of the estates’ privileges in order to protect the crown, the people, and the estates’ rights. The measures to be taken were to orient themselves to the current circumstances (“maßregeln nach der fürdringenden gefahr und beiwaltenden umbständen zu dirigiren”<sup>40</sup>). That is why the fiscal administration should be withdrawn from the estates as it was done in Silesia before.<sup>41</sup> For Haugwitz this change should not only lead to an improvement of the administration making it more efficient. Moreover, he aimed at creating a new system (“errichtung”<sup>42</sup>) following the interests of the state. This entity had to be created; it did not previously exist in Austria. The innovative character of reform is shown in the negative evaluation of the current state of administration that leads to deepest danger for the monarchy. That argumentation clearly shows the rational and pragmatic considerations on which the reform was founded. The main goal of change should be the preservation of the state; its interests were classified more important than the particular interests of the estates.

Friedrich von Harrach (1699–1749), who was a minister at the Austrian court, was asked to evaluate Haugwitz’s draft in January 1748.<sup>43</sup> In his report, von Harrach follows Haugwitz’s argumentation that the Austrian state is in the deepest danger and thus needs measures to be saved and maintained (“rettungs- und erhaltungsmittel”<sup>44</sup>). Nevertheless, he argues against Haugwitz’s ideas which would, according to von Harrach, lead to the largest danger for the crown, the people, and, most important for him, to the privileges of the estates instead of preparing the way for their protection. He thus proposes exactly the opposite: The tax administration should be put in the hands of the estates to assure the finance of the military. It is striking that they propose completely differing measures to reach the common aim of the conservation of the state. Change in whatever direction was therefore strongly connected with the interests of the state and also part of a certain reason of the state. For both proposers, change was a necessity for the further existence of the state. Change

in that sense is unavoidable. This pattern of legitimating change was to be repeated throughout the further reforms again and again.

The decision to carry out the reform was made in the Privy Conference (Geheime Konferenz) on 29 January 1748. The protocol of this session of the Privy Conference<sup>45</sup> repeats the argumentation mentioned before, stating that the survival of the monarchy would depend on this decision ("das heil derer länder und die aufrechterhaltung der oesterreichischen monarchie"<sup>46</sup>). Contrary to this, in his statement, Philipp Joseph von Kinsky (1700–1749) was sceptical of any kind of change. Hence, all changes should be implemented with extreme care of preventing the bad ("Es lehret aber die vom vergangnen habende erfahrung, daß umb nicht was übles anstatt des gedeihlichen zu stiften, nichts zu übereilen sondern mit bedacht zu werk zu gehen"<sup>47</sup>). This shows that tradition was an argument that could be used to give reason to both change and standstill.

After his proposals had been criticised by his colleagues, Haugwitz presented his plan for the new *Hauptsystem*. He repeated the arguments that he had already mentioned in his draft, underlining again the importance of the reform for the survival of the monarchy. The current state and the loss of Silesia, he argued, were results of the insistence in the old tax system. He becomes even more specific, stating it was the self-interest of the estates that caused the loss of Silesia.<sup>48</sup> According to Haugwitz, the estates were doing wrong in abusing their privileges, hence it is the monarch's duty to dispose of ("abstellen"<sup>49</sup>) this possibility of fraud. Therefore, it was an indispensable remedy ("unentbehrllichkeit des remedii"<sup>50</sup>) to cut their privileges. Following Haugwitz's proposal, change brought by the monarch was absolutely needed. This change consisted of setting up two things: the establishment of a new tax system and the restriction of rights of the estates. The second point was the crucial one. Therefore, after his proposal had been accepted it was decided to bring about change in a soft way. The project of a new tax system should be introduced to the estates in the most gracious way to maintain their dignity. It should be presented as a project ("project"<sup>51</sup>) instead of a resolution ("entschluß"<sup>52</sup>).

In that phase of the reform Haugwitz used a more drastic argumentation to give reason for the measures. Improvement was not the goal anymore. Instead, everyone involved used the destiny of Austria – which was perceived to be at stake – as an argument ("sobald das gebäude nicht in einem rechtschaffenen grund gesetzt, solches gar bald zu boden fallen muss"<sup>53</sup>). He favours change, which is unavoidable to maintain the state. Therefore all irregularities should be swiped away and the state should be cured. That strong argument implied that there was no other way of acting if the state should survive. The same argumentation was used to convince the Länder to agree to an increase of the Contribution over the next ten years – noticeable, for example, in the instructions Maria Theresia gave to the states in the summer of 1748.<sup>54</sup> The estates probably gave their approval because the fear of a conquest by Prussia was real for

them.<sup>55</sup> Every Austrian state had accepted the new *Contributionssystema* after negotiations at the end of 1748. As a way to establish the system in every part of Austria, local deputations were installed and directly subordinated to Maria Theresia. The old central institutions were excluded from the decision process and were merely obligated to execute Maria Theresia's decisions. Thus local *Kreisämter* were created as well as the *Hauptdeputation* that functioned as the central administration unit of the established system.

Despite having been successful with the first part of his state reform, Haugwitz was not ready yet. In another presentation at court on 4 November 1748, he suggested an even more extensive plan for the financial administration. He wanted to install a unique *Finanzdirectorium*, which should be the only central institution in charge of the finances. Different from the first establishment of his plans for the entire Austrian state, he argued only for an improvement and stabilisation of the system ("befestigung des systematis"<sup>56</sup>). Though establishing something completely new, words like *errichtung* were not used in his argumentation. The reason for this is shown in his further argumentation. Despite being a completely new institution, the *Finanzdirectorium* is just a small improvement of the already installed *Haubtsystem*. He justified the change in another presentation, as its only purpose was to serve a system that was already declared as necessary beforehand. That is why he gave highest priority to that project, for it was the core of every well-ordered state ("Die seele des staats ist ein wohl eingerichtetes finanzdirectorium"<sup>57</sup>). If it was missing, the state would encounter the biggest danger. To argue for that institution he uses the very pattern of argumentation he had already used: criticism of the behaviour of the estates, Prussia as a model as they have a comparable institution, ministers who just took care of their self-interest, and retrospective views for what went wrong in the past.<sup>58</sup> It is striking that he illustrates the dangers for the Austrian monarchy without mentioning the argument of danger from foreign states as he did before. The reason for this lies in the Peace of Aachen, signed one month before on 18 October 1748. Though peace was established, the state was still perceived to be in danger by an administration failing to function properly. Thus, change was still recognised to be necessary, although the monarch had already achieved improvements through the establishment of the new finance system ("solides finanzsystema festgestellet"<sup>59</sup>). By means of that argumentation, Haugwitz achieved two things: Firstly, he makes clear that it was only the monarch who should decide on change. Secondly, he defended himself and his first changes against attacks from other ministers. Furthermore, he connected the core of his reform, namely the establishment of one single finance administration that was responsible for all Austrian territories, with the monarch, the only person empowered to make decisions. As a way to push for a more centralised administration he showed examples of achievements

that came with cutting of privileges of bad ministers under Maria Theresia and her ancestors.<sup>60</sup>

These arguments seemed to have been successful as Maria Theresia was declaring in a rescript dated 15 January 1749 that the financial and the judicial administration should be separated from each other. Her argumentation follows Haugwitz's and she speaks about the improvement of the system ("Die annoch verschiedentlich wahrnehmende gebrechen . . . in eine bessere verfassung zu setzen . . . zur beförderung der justiz und des gemeinen wesens wohlfahrt"<sup>61</sup>). This was likewise reflected upon in the documents published by Maria Theresia in order to inform her ministers on her decision. Therein she speaks of a complete change of the administration ("vollkommen neue einrichtung"<sup>62</sup>). She also refers to the importance of measures that were declared unavoidable and made for serving the common good ("zum besten meines dienstes habe unentbehrlich gefunden"<sup>63</sup>). Unfortunately, no sources survive from the time between the first steps of the separation of the financial and the judicial administration and the final establishment of the *Directorium in Publicis et Cameralibus* and the *Oberste Justizstelle* on 2 May 1749. However, the separation of finances and justice and the creation of the new institutions show the extensive effects that came with the reform of military finances and the installation of the *Haubtssystem*. This attitude is also exemplified in the framework of the announcement of the reform in a special issue of the *Wienerisches Diarium*, one of the oldest Austrian newspapers.<sup>64</sup> Here the separation of the financial and judicial administration is explained relatively mildly as a change (Abänderung<sup>65</sup>) of the already existing *Haubtssystem*. The article gives rational reasons for the separation of the financial and judicial administration as it should facilitate and accelerate justice to serve the common good. The article also shows that the establishment of the new institutions of financial and judicial administration is a way to remedy problems ("für das künftige abzuhelfen"<sup>66</sup>). Thus, change and remedy are strongly combined with each other.

Other members of the court underlined more strongly the novelty of the reform. Johann Joseph von Khevenhüller (1706–1776), who was chief treasurer (Oberstkämmerer) and later became grandmaster of the court (Obersthofmeister), showed his reservation against the reform in his famous court diaries, labelling it a cause of chaos ("weilen man dergleichen revolution sich nicht erwartet und nach deren erfolg aber noch mehrere abänderungen besorget, in erwegung daß – wann einmal der esprit de nouveauté zu regiren anfang – selber nicht leicht zu ruhen, sondern immer weiters sich auszubreiten und eine verwirrung mit der anderen zu häufen pflegt"<sup>67</sup>). This illustrates the contemporary refusal of processes of change, neglecting the effect of change as remedy. It is not in accordance with the argumentation of improvement but instead condemns the change by utilising the pejorative expression *esprit de nouveauté*. This is an attitude that already became visible in Kinsky's statement.

Another layer of the reform can be seen in the appointment letter of Haugwitz as president of the Directorium issued by Maria Theresia. Within its framework, she states that it should be Haugwitz's task to take care of the organisation and the preservation of the institution ("expedition und festgestellte gute ordnung . . . beibehalten"<sup>68</sup>). The establishment of an ordered system is perceived as an investment for the future. As it affects the monarchy in a positive way, it should be maintained. It seems that change in the context of the Austrian monarchy consisted of two layers: one on which the monarch ruled and another concerned with the implementation carried out by her officials. First, it is the task of the monarch to recognise the best order for his or her country and to establish it with his or her authority. Second, it is the task of the officials to keep that order also with the way of changing it on a minor level. This is also reflected in the names that were given to the respective measures. The construction (*errichtung*) of a new system was something that could only be done by the monarch. The improvement (*beförderung* and other terms) of that system could be fulfilled by members of the authority supervised by the monarch.

### **3. Argumentation for Change by Maria Theresia**

As the proceedings at court have already shown a particular attitude towards change, Maria Theresia also proved those views in a memorandum of 1750/51. She was personally involved in its composition. It therefore reflects the reform from a monarchical point of view.<sup>69</sup> Following her opinion there were two sources of problems. Firstly, the fact that Austrian monarchy had no money, no army, and no advice ("von Geld, Truppen und Rat entblößet"<sup>70</sup>). The latter is particularly important for stating the relevance of information for the rule. As she had not been introduced well enough to her office at that point, she came across a lacking experience and knowledge ("Experianz und Wissenschaft"<sup>71</sup>). These difficulties all together caused a miserable condition of the state, making it nearly impossible to rule successfully. Secondly, the sources of problems in Austria also lay in the past having led to failures in the government ("Mißbräuche[n], welche bei der österreichischen Regierung nach und nach eingeschlichen"<sup>72</sup>). She is not blaming her ancestors but still uses the past as a negative example that needed to be changed. As far as traditions ("wohlhergebrachte Gewohnheite[n]"<sup>73</sup>) were concerned, only those that served the common good were to be maintained. In her eyes, a return to the past was not an option. She was convinced that it was those "große Staatsfehler"<sup>74</sup> resulting in ruined finances that had led to the impossibility of defending Silesia against Prussia. Consequently, the disadvantageous *Peace of Dresden* had to be accepted in 1745.<sup>75</sup>

This estimation of the Austrian monarchy mirrors the two basic factors necessary for the process of accelerating an improvement as presented in

the previous parts: the disposal of information on the current state and the initiation of change. With both lacking, it literally was, in her royal opinion, a godly induced miracle that protected the Austrian states.<sup>76</sup> Therefore, the Austrian states required an improvement aiming at the creation of a well-organised state. The proposed measures point exactly in that direction. She argues for a change of the defective administration (“verderbliche Verfassung sowohl hier als in denen Ländern”<sup>77</sup>) through establishing a new system (“neue Einrichtung, welche die Stabilierung der systematischen Ordnung zum Grunde hat”<sup>78</sup>). However, Maria Theresia favoured a very static system. In so doing, she did not put the legitimacy of the reforms into question, as they were perceived to be directly derived from the superior role of the monarchy. Thus, the changes set into motion should be conserved for the future (“getroffenen Einricht- und Verfassung [soll] nichts abzuändern [sein]”<sup>79</sup>) as they are part of a monarchic policy.

Following that argumentation, change is good as long as it helps to remove defects in the state. It could only be organised by the monarch and pursued by the transformation of the monarchy into a steady state. The combining point of these poles is the criticism that the estates were mostly to blame for the problems of the state. They were denounced for acting only for the benefit of their own interest by misusing the monarch’s bounteousness.<sup>80</sup> The measures taken to save the situation were hence two-fold: cutting away the estate’s traditional rights and establishing something new. Thus, the reform mainly dealt with the (re-)construction of a divine order (“gottgefälligen Fürgang zwischen Obrigkeit und Untertanen”)<sup>81</sup> achieved through changes in the administration (“völlige Abänderung in der Regierungsform”<sup>82</sup>). This was supposed to prevent the unlawful suppression of subjects by the estates and to administratively centre the monarch. The change should perfectly supply the monarch with information on the state (“wahre Kenntniss von der Beschaffenheit seiner Länder”<sup>83</sup>) and thus enable him or her to change failures (“deren Gravamina zu erörtern und zu examiniere”<sup>84</sup>). This creation of an order purportedly pleasing to God allowed and demanded changes and consequently required the abolishment of bad habits in administration.

That view is also mirrored in the book *Princeps in Compendium*,<sup>85</sup> a seventeenth-century mirror for princes written in the sphere of Habsburg court. It was important for the house Habsburg as it was probably used for the education of their princes.<sup>86</sup> In that context, Maria Theresia followed the typical rules of monarchical behaviour of that time, creating a new order for the state. The way in which she describes the process of establishing the reform also echoed that idea. The measures to carry out reform came from her ministers and enabled her to maintain the monarchy (“Bartenstein und Haugwitz gaben mir vor den Staat und Erhaltung der Monarchie das Benötigte in die Hand”<sup>87</sup>). They are praised as ministers who only supported her rule – even by pointing out mistakes (“allein

zu[r] [ihrer] Direction gedienet, umb meine Fehler mir zu erkennen zu geben”<sup>88</sup>). This view presented by Maria Theresia was in accordance with the ideal relation between ministers and their monarch based on the mirror for princes previously mentioned. Therein it is stated that ministers should support the monarch without developing their own interests.<sup>89</sup> The knowledge required to reform the state is therefore something from the outside which was supposed to be used by the ruler. In choosing the right ministers, the monarch shows his or her ability to run the state in a good way. Contrary to that, other ministers representing those who solely worked for their own interest or the one’s of their estates, like Harrach and Kinsky,<sup>90</sup> were assessed quite negatively by the empress. She took them in her memorandum to be opposed to the reform, for protecting their own interests without paying attention to the public good or the monarch’s authority.<sup>91</sup>

The outcome of the reform reflected the idea of removing old and defective parts of the state system and replacing them with something new. With the establishment of the Directorium in Publicis et Cameralibus as an instrument of a centralised finance administration, the Austrian and Bohemian chancelleries were dismantled to become institutions with only minor relevance. Therefore, this change could not be described with the contemporary vocabulary for understanding reform which generally meant the re-establishment of an ideal old state.<sup>92</sup> Instead she, as well as her ministers before her, used terms like “Veränderung”<sup>93</sup> or “neue Einrichtung”<sup>94</sup> to describe the process of implementing the reform. Furthermore, in criticising the mistakes of the past, it was not possible to go back to an ideal that lay in the past. Though the idea ruling the state followed traditional ways originating in mirrors of princes, how to do this was something new and innovative resulting from the latest knowledge of contemporary political science. The way she reflected on the reform gives an insight into how to run the state: The information about the current situation of the state comes from outside, as do measures to improve it. The final act of changing was, in contrast, to be run by the monarch.

#### 4. Perception of Change in Contemporary Political Science

Following the concept of change presented by Venturi, improvement does not arrive out of thin air. Instead, it is always based on “knowledge and enlightenment.”<sup>95</sup> This is also true for the reforms under Maria Theresia, which were in conformity with an enlightened understanding of the state. This means that the state could be formed like a system and just needed to be adjusted in the right way. The ideas being abbreviated by enlightened thinking did not propose any particular measures concerning the operation of the state. It rather presented idealised targets to be achieved by a rational administration using a pragmatic politic.<sup>96</sup>

In 1750, the Cameralist Johann Gottlob von Justi (1717–1771) gave an insight into the understanding of these targets in the context of his inaugural lecture at the Theresianum. The Theresianum was an academy for knights established by Maria Theresia in 1746. It aimed at training the nobility to be professional administrative personnel able to act in accordance with the principles of Maria Theresia's rule.<sup>97</sup> The curriculum was composed by contemporary state-of-the-art thinkers. Consequently, the Theresianum was also a place for the nobility to get in contact with the ideas of the contemporary enlightenment discourse.<sup>98</sup> In a speech dedicated to Maria Theresia and her ministers, Justi took the reform of 1748/49 as an example to reflect on these ideas. He stated that the superior destiny of mankind should be happiness (*Glückseligkeit*). To achieve that goal a fixed order that connects the subjects with each other is needed ("festgesetzte Ordnung . . . , wodurch eben die gemeinschaftliche Hülfsleistung wirksam und nützlich wird"<sup>99</sup>). Furthermore, only the state could achieve the *Glückseligkeit* in the best way ("daß wir lediglich durch die Einrichtung der Republiken einen glücklichen Zustand dieses zeitlichen Lebens erreichen können"<sup>100</sup>). The state is accordingly understood as the ultimate guarantor of the common good – given the case that it is constituted in the right way. That is the reason why the reforms mentioned previously always utilised the argument of the interest of state to enable change. Changing the constitution of the state to a more sustainable way, Justi argued, also served the *Glückseligkeit* as only the state was identified as being able to provide it. Hence, the state should be constituted in a reasonable order.<sup>101</sup> Justi praised Maria Theresia for having organised the state in exactly that way.<sup>102</sup> However, which measures were motivated by the sciences and what does this imply about change?

Justi also gave an insight into the measures that he considered the most important. According to his inaugural lecture, a stable state could only be maintained through richness and security. Richness was to be achieved by mining, trade, and foreigners coming to the country.<sup>103</sup> Security is something that particularly touches the inner constitution of a state and could thus become be a reason for change in administration. As the state was conceptualised as organised like a clockwork ("Uhrwerk"<sup>104</sup>) – it was seen to be the monarch's task to take care of its set-up. Science in this context should help to propose measures for guaranteeing a systematically working state. Cameralism, for example, proposed ways of establishing a good tax system for the state ("wie die Abgaben auf eine bequeme und dem Staate vortheilhaftige Art einzurichten sind"<sup>105</sup>). It delivered measurements to improve the state and to lead it to perfection ("auf den höchsten Punkt der Vollkommenheit treiben"<sup>106</sup>). The systematic set-up of the state was to enable the monarch to complete the apparatus ("Die große Einrichtung des gemeinen Wesen ist eine Maschine, davon alle Theile, alle Räder, alle Triebfedern übereinstimmen

müssen”<sup>107</sup>). Both the constitution of the state and its administration (“zulängliche Einrichtung”<sup>108</sup>) were allowed to be subjected to inevitable changes. In contrast, the destination of the state to fulfil the Glückseligkeit is fixed and should not be altered.<sup>109</sup> Thus, a state being able to adapt to certain circumstances was required to bring about Glückseligkeit. States unable to establish such a good, so Justi’s line of reasoning goes, have constitutions that are doomed to become extinct. Justi gives examples from the past for states like this, naming the Roman Empire and the Carolingian state. These states were not able to establish their administration in the right way or were lacking science and, therefore, proved to be unable to find the right constitution.<sup>110</sup> For Justi this is also true for the states of his time. They could not be defended against enemies as they were not organised well enough and did not have a good order (“ein Staat, der . . . keine gute Einrichtung und keine Ordnung hat, auch niemals seinen Feinden genugsamen Widerstand thün können”<sup>111</sup>). Here Justi clearly shows the importance of adjusting the state’s inner constitution to maintain it. Change leading to improvement, therefore, enables the state to cope with even the worst circumstances. He is not describing a change process leading to a new system of government. That is why he only uses terms describing an improvement of the state instead of a completely new arrangement. These improvements are not only the task of the monarch but also of his or her advisors, who gained their knowledge with the help of sciences.

Another state journalist, Friedrich Carl von Moser (1723–1798), the publicist Johann Jacob Moser’s son, wrote on reform in 1759. In contrast to Justi, Moser’s main goal, however, was not the establishment of *Glückseligkeit*. Instead, he wanted to show the importance of a systematically ordered state.<sup>112</sup> His book *Der Herr und der Diener geschildert mit patriotischer Freyheit*<sup>113</sup> refers to the reforms of Maria Theresia and praises her as a model for an ideal regent. Though not calling her by name, her model of reign should be a base for maxims of how to run a state.<sup>114</sup> The goal of the book was to improve the political situation by giving ideas of good government. Hence, it can be perceived as a mirror for princes, or, as the author wrote by himself, as an “ABC Buch”<sup>115</sup> for princes. It was most likely a commissioned work. Moser values change as a step to save the state at the beginning of a new reign: “Man muß seiner Sache sehr gewiß seyn, ehe man ein neues System erwählet. Ist aber das alte Staats-Gebäude offenbar und aus zuverlässiger Erfahrung unschicklich und keiner Reparation werth, so unternehme er sogleich beym Antritt seiner Regierung die Reforme.”<sup>116</sup> Strikingly, Moser describes a variant of change leading to the establishment of a new system with the term *Reform*. This is an example of the change in the meaning of *Reform* being understood as a synonym for improvement.<sup>117</sup> The monarch’s role in Moser’s concept is indeed the same as it was in the reforms 1748/49.

Furthermore, he also states that change has to be carried out in a careful way and with respect for the affected groups:

Ein Herr weiche bey dem Antritt seiner Regierung von dem alten System nicht leichtsinnig ab. . . . Jedoch brauche er dabey die Vorsichtigkeit, seinen Plan nur als ein Project auszugeben, damit er nicht in die Versuchung des Eigensinns falle, sondern, was besser und richtiger ist, mit Ehren ab- und zuzuthun Freyheit behalte.<sup>118</sup>

These descriptions perfectly illustrate the proceedings of the organisation of the reform of the Austrian state with the establishment of the *Hauptsystem*.

These two short examples give an understanding of the positive perception of change in the mid-eighteenth century. Both authors present reasons for change that more or less refer to the Austrian state under Maria Theresia and her reforms. They both show that a constant change was unavoidable to maintain the state in the face of certain circumstances. Justi and Moser are arguing in favour of an even further change of the status quo. That being so, change became an essential part of the state. The reform of the system of 1748/49, which was established in 1761, exemplified the close connection between this kind of theoretical thinking and the administrative practice. Comparing the two authors, one is also made aware of the different types of change: one leading to improvement and the other one establishing a new system.

## 5. Reformed Change: the State Reform of Haugwitz 1761

The Seven Years' War (1756–1763) can be seen as one of the very circumstances mentioned by Justi to bring about change. As the reform of 1748/49 was not successful in securing the state finances, it had been criticised for not being able to save the state. Therefore, a new wave of reformative impetus broke through which was caused by Wenzel Anton von Kaunitz-Rietberg (1711–1794).<sup>119</sup> Comparable to Haugwitz, Kaunitz had already worked in the Austrian administration before proceeding to plan reforms for the Austrian state. He negotiated the Peace of Aachen of 1745 and was the spiritus rector of the Austrian-French alliance in the run-up to the Seven Years' War. As state chancellor, he was in charge of foreign politics.

With the first defeats of the Austrian army during the war and a nearly bankrupt state, the changes established by Haugwitz, as for instance the extraordinary estate taxes, were discussed again.<sup>120</sup> In contrast to Haugwitz's reform, it was not Kaunitz's aim to introduce a completely new system of administration. Instead, he wanted to improve the system of 1748/49 and re-evaluate the structure of government in order to make

it more efficient. Therefore, he intended to establish the Council of State (*Staatsrath*) as the monarch's advisory board. The main function of this central council was to propose ideas to improve the state. Acting like a copy of the monarch, it was allowed to demand full insights into all things going on in the state administration. It should be organised in the spirit of enlightenment administration discourse, i.e. in obedience of the idea that harmony can be achieved by putting together people with conflicting personalities.<sup>121</sup>

Haugwitz proposed the improvement of the already existing system for the first time at a presentation held at court on 6 August 1758. It was his idea to secure the good order of the state and the monarchy's welfare ("das systema in internis überhaupt auf die leichteste und vollkommenste arth verbessert, denen sich äusserenden gebrechen mit jedermanns zufriedenheit abgeholfen, . . . die monarchie in einem blühenden wohlstand erhalten"<sup>122</sup>). He also refers to the reform of 1748/49, criticising that it was not yet perfect as it lacked an overview of the whole system and failed to take care of the common good ("vollkommenen einrichtung und oberdirection ermangelt"<sup>123</sup>). Therefore, he argued, the Austrian state was in need of an institution that was able to review proposals for improvement which could be established by the monarch later on ("verbesserungs-vorschläge ohnpartheyisch und auf das genaueste prüfen . . . wonächst gleichwohnen dem souverainen bevor bliebe, nach seinem gut-befinden den conferenzschluss zu fassen"<sup>124</sup>). By means of this measure the process of change would have become institutionalised. The gathering of information and the proposal of change would have been run by the *Staatsrath*, while the monarch finally was to establish the change.

As the crown did not agree with his suggestion, he tried to convince its representatives a second time on 9 December 1760. Now the pressure on the Austrian monarchy was even higher, as it gradually became clear that Silesia was definitively lost to Prussia in the aftermath of the defeat of Torgau. However, the lost battle offered Kaunitz the possibility to push ahead with his project to build the *Staatsrath* as a new both powerful and central government institution.<sup>125</sup> He pointed towards the dangers for the Austrian state that resulted from a potential standstill ("L'edifice ne peut gueres manquer d'ecrouler si les choses restent comme ells sont."<sup>126</sup>). His line of argument complied with the very reason that Haugwitz had already used as a starting point for his reform. In addition, Kaunitz even utilised the same metaphor for the state as Haugwitz did in 1748 (l'edifice/gebäude). This construction of danger enabled him to elaborate on all the mistakes of the administration: the total disorder and lack of money ("La plupart des departements du gouvernement sont dans le plus grand desourdre, presqu'aucune des branches d'administration n'est governée avec l'intelligence et l'attention qui seroient nécessaires"<sup>127</sup>). The only solution was to find a remedy ("remède"<sup>128</sup>). According to his beliefs, this remedy would help the state to achieve a new heyday ("etat plus florissant"<sup>129</sup>).

This was already intended by means of the reform of 1749 that provided for certain changes and reorganisations of the administration (“quelques changemens ou arrangemens”<sup>130</sup>). However, they were not successful as they did not follow a systematic plan (“ce seroit une grande erreur d’envisager comme des moyens sistematiques”<sup>131</sup>). After evaluating miscellaneous institutions that could eventually be helpful, Kaunitz voted for the establishment of a superior direction of the government which should only counsel the monarch. In his eyes, this *Staatsrath* was the only institution suitable for that purpose. It would save the state and lead the government to perfection.<sup>132</sup>

Kaunitz succeeded in convincing Maria Theresia to establish the *Staatsrath*. Moreover, he imposed one further rule: No member of the *Staatsrath* should be installed in other boards of administration in order to avoid any conflicts of interest. As a result, in his nomination letter by Maria Theresia of 14 December 1760, Haugwitz was freed from his obligation in the *Directorium*, though not without being praised for his past work. In the same letter, the duty of the *Staatsrath* is sketched out: It was to take care of the current state and to guarantee the improvement of both the state and its government (“den zustand, zusammenhang und die verbesserung aller meiner erbländen und hof- wie auch stellen beständig vor augen zu haben”<sup>133</sup>). This agenda of the *Staatsrath*, which was drafted in its first session on 26 January 1761, substantiates this point. It should be its first duty to find failures in the administration and subsequently to abolish them (“abschaffung der eingeschlichenen missbräuche”)<sup>134</sup>. Furthermore, it should supervise the suggestions of improvement and keep the monarch informed (“siebentens: alle und jede vorgebracht werdende meliorierungsentwürfe emsigst zu prüfen, zugleich aber, um die dem staate etwa anklebende mängel aus dem grunde zu heilen, achtens: alle gebrechen, welche sich in der verfassung des staats ereignen dörften, und die bey der monarchie beobachtete etwaige unterlassung des nützlichen und bewerkstelligung des schädlichen anzuseigen; wozu denn auch neuntens: die ausforschung und vorschlagung der verbesserungs-mittel derer bey verschiedenen verwesungen etwa vorfindigen mängel und gebrechen nothwendig zu rechnen ist.”<sup>135</sup>). This agenda shows that the newly established *Staatsrath* was indeed an institution designed for the improvement of the state. The council was the institutionalisation of improvement which was not systematically integrated into the business of state government. Thus, the *Staatsrath* fulfilled all obligations being important to implement change: evaluation, proposal of improvement, and advice for the monarch. Yet the monarch still had the ultimate say on these matters. The *Staatsrath* was not an independent institution of government but a counsel to propose improvement.

An article in the *Wiener Diarium* clarified this division of labour. It was the duty of the *Staatsrath* to gather information and to suggest measures of improvement to erect and maintain a perfect order of the state (“beste

und thunlichte Mittel einzuschlagen, damit alle Landes-geschäften und Angelegenheiten auf das reiflichste erwogen, in der vollkommnesten Ordnung und Aufsicht erhalten [werden]”<sup>136</sup>). According to the statement written in the *Diarium*, it should be the monarch who finally was to establish these improvements (“Einricht- und verbesserungen von Ihrer Kaiserl.Königl.Apostol. Majestät verfüget [werden]”<sup>137</sup>). The necessity to establish an institution like the *Staatsrath* is once more justified by referring to the preservation of the state, security, and welfare (“Aufrechterhaltung, Sicherheit und Wolfahrt”<sup>138</sup>). Additionally, the article alluded to the rational facilitation of the governmental workflow which would bring benefits to the state in the present as well as in the future (“in künftigen . . . Zeiten”<sup>139</sup>).

The *Staatsrath* indeed fulfilled that task perfectly. One of its first proposed measures was the reorganisation of the tax collection system. Therefore, the Directorium, which was no longer led by Haugwitz since he became a member of the *Staatsrath*, was dismantled in 1762. From that year on, the collection of the *Contribution* was handed over to the new Austrian-Bohemian chancellery. In addition, the administration of the finances was executed by the reorganised Hofkammer, which turned into the central finance institution responsible for all Habsburg states. Though many institutions resulting from the reform of 1748/49 changed, the Oberste Justizstelle remained firm until the middle of the nineteenth century.<sup>140</sup> This shows that the reform of 1761 and the following years was not aiming at a complete restructuring of the administration. The core of Haugwitz’s reform was the creation of a both more differentiated and systematic administration. While the separation of financial and judicial issues was just one step towards in that direction, the reorganisation of 1761 turned out to be another one, leading to an even clearer differentiation of the administrative institutions.<sup>141</sup> Anyhow, the reforms did not follow a master plan. Instead change, understood as improvement, was recognised as a part of the administrative work.

## Conclusion

The reform programme was not limited to the early years of Maria Theresia’s rule. In a similar way, torture was banned in 1766. This marked a break with old traditions as the introduction of a new law system with the *Codex Theresianus* did (also 1766). The general reform of the criminal law with the release of the Criminal Code (*Allgemeines Gesetzbuch*) in 1787 is another example. It banned the death penalty and crimes based on witchcraft, black magic, and heresy.<sup>142</sup> That is why the reign of Maria Theresia and Joseph II, her son, is often labelled as *reform absolutism*.

Different from the state reforms in Maria Theresia’s early years of reign, the reforms under Joseph II followed a more distinguished humanistic ideal. The measures to maintain the state did not only stem from the

European Enlightenment discourse but also the aim of the state. Hence, they were rather ideologically motivated than pragmatic.<sup>143</sup> A further analysis of changes in the second half of the reign of Maria Theresia when she ruled together with her son Joseph II could eventually show a more heterogeneous language. In contrast, during the period analysed in this chapter, welfare and conservation of the state were consulted as arguments in order to legitimate projected changes. It was perceived by the protagonists presented here as a way to improve a defective state. This should have been achieved with either creating something new in a systematic way or improving the already established system. In addition, dismantling defective parts of the state was another measure to improve the state. The argument of improving the state particularly became more and more important as that should enable it to endure all possible hardships. This perpetuated change as a necessary part of the administrative work by making it a task for the ruling monarch. Being dictated by certain circumstances, change should at best not be executed without knowledge of the current situation. It was the task of the monarch's counsellors to gather this information and to propose measures for improvement.

This is also reflected in the language used to argue for the changes. Most of the administrative changes for the time of analysis were described and given reason by terms of improvement. Only the reform of 1748, with the establishment of a new system of tax administration, used a term for creating something new (*errichtung*). A particular language of reform that follows the change in administrative practices and is adjusted to new realities is hardly recognisable. The fact that most of the changes, being far ranging or not, were described as improvement confirms the assertion that all the changes in administration were answers to current contemporary problems and did not have the goal to create a new ideal of state. The argumentation used to give reason to the change, therefore, does not give an indication about the range of change.

The contemporary argumentation of the changes lay in emphasising the improving character of the measures. That is also the reason why the term *reform* was hardly used. With the changes aiming at improvement, they needed an imperfect image of the state as a comparison. This could be found in contemporary defects of the state as well as in failures in the past. A reform, understood as restoration of an ideal state of the past, was not intended and therefore not used to describe the changes. In the few cases where the term *reform* was used, it already had the more modern meaning as a synonym for improvement. Aside from this example, the argumentation for change did not differ in the analysed period. It was only modern historiography that put these changes in a wider context of state centralisation and aims of creating a modern state. Thus, the changes in administration can only be called *reform* if they are understood as a programme aiming at a certain target without leading to a systematic change. The analysis of the language in argumentation and

specific terms for change has shown that this was not true for the first half of Maria Theresia's rule. This exemplifies the different perspectives from which historians and contemporary sources were looking at the reforms of Maria Theresia (mentioned in the introduction).

## Notes

1. J. von Sonnenfels, *Die erste Vorlesung welche Herr Hofrath von Sonnenfels nach dem Tode Marien Theresiens hiebt* (Wien: Kurzböck, 1780), 35.
2. Ibid., 36.
3. F. Venturi, *The End of the Old Regime in Europe, 1776–1789: Republican Patriotism and the Empires of the East* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1991), 2:616.
4. E. Wagermann, "Maria Theresia: Eine Monarchie der Reform", in *Aufklärung und Josephinismus: Studien zu Ursprung und Nachwirkungen der Reformen Josephs II.*, ed. E. Wangermann, et al. (Bochum: Dr. Dieter Winkler, 2016), 78.
5. J.H. Elliott, "A Europe of Composite Monarchies", *Past and Present* 137 (1992): 48–71.
6. A. von Arneth, *Geschichte Maria Theresia's* (Wien: Braumüller, 1863–1879).
7. D.E.D. Beales, *Enlightenment and reform in eighteenth century Europe* (London: Tauris, 2005).
8. W. Heindl, "Bureaucracy, Officials, and the State in the Austrian Monarchy: Stages of Change Since the Eighteenth Century", *Austrian History Yearbook* 37 (2006): 36–37.
9. A. Bührer and D. Schiersner, "Reformen – Verlierer: Forschungsfragen zu einem besonderen Verhältnis", in *Reformverlierer 1000–1800: Zum Umgang mit Niederlagen in der europäischen Vormoderne*, ed. A. Bührer and D. Schiersner (Berlin: Duncker & Humboldt, 2016), 13–14.
10. J. Farr, "Understanding Conceptual Change Politically", in *Political Innovation and Conceptual Change*, ed. T. Bell (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 24–49.
11. Bührer and Schiersner, "Reformen – Verlierer", 14.
12. Q. Skinner, "Language and Political Change", in *Political Innovation and Conceptual Change*, ed. T. Bell (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 6–23.
13. F.A.J. Szabo, *Kaunitz and Enlightened Absolutism: 1753–1780* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 73–74.
14. P.G.M. Dickson, *Finance and Government Under Maria Theresia: 1740–1780* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987), 1:1.
15. Ibid., 1:14.
16. F. Walter, *Die Theresianische Staatsreform von 1749* (Munich: Oldenbourg, 1958), 15–20.
17. Ibid., 21.
18. From 11 million fl. (1740) to 5,24 million fl. (1741)
19. Dickson, *Finance and Government*, 2:4–7.
20. Ibid., 2:8.
21. I. Cerman, *Habsburgischer Adel und Aufklärung: Bildungsverhalten des Wiener Hofadels im 18. Jahrhundert* (Stuttgart: Steiner, 2010), 110.
22. H.M. Scott, *Enlightened Absolutism: Reform and Reformers in Later Eighteenth-Century Europe* (Hounds mills: Macmillan, 1990), 152–153.
23. Notata from 1743, in H. Kretschmayr, J. Kallbrunner, and M. Winkler, eds., *Die Österreichische Zentralverwaltung: 2. Abteilung Von der Vereinigung*

- der österreichischen und böhmischen Hofkanzlei bis zur Einrichtung der Ministerialverfassung (1749–1848)* (Wien: Holzhausen, 1925), 2:136–152.
24. B. Stollberg-Rilinger, *Maria Theresia: Die Kaiserin in ihrer Zeit: Eine Biographie* (Munich: C.H. Beck, 2018), 178–184.
  25. Haugwitz, Notata, long version, 1743, in Kretschmayr, Kallbrunner, and Winkler, *Die Österreichische Zentralverwaltung*, 2:136–152.
  26. Scott, *Enlightened Absolutism*, 150–151.
  27. Ibid.
  28. Haugwitz, Notata, long version, 1743, in Kretschmayr, Kallbrunner, and Winkler, *Die Österreichische Zentralverwaltung*, 2:136–152, 140.
  29. Ibid., 142.
  30. Haugwitz, Notata, short version, 1743, in Ibid., 2:132–155, 132.
  31. Patent from Maria Theresia for Haugwitz, 12 March 1744, in Ibid., 2:150–152, 150.
  32. Nota propably December 1746, in Ibid., 2:151.
  33. Instruction from Maria Theresia for Haugwitz, 21 December 1746, in Ibid., 2:153.
  34. Ibid.
  35. Documents to that reform in Ibid., 2:152–169.
  36. Haugwitz, Fernere ohnmaßgebliche a.u. gemüthsmeinung über die zu errichtende cameral- und militarsystemata, December 1747, in Ibid., 2:181–188.
  37. Ibid., 181.
  38. Ibid., 182.
  39. Ibid., 183.
  40. Ibid., 182.
  41. Ibid., 183–184.
  42. Ibid., 181.
  43. Ibid., 190–193.
  44. Ibid., 190.
  45. Protocoll of the Conferenz, 29 January 1748, in Ibid., 2:195–206.
  46. Ibid., 195.
  47. Ibid., 199.
  48. Ibid., 200–201.
  49. Ibid., 202.
  50. Ibid., 203.
  51. Ibid., 205.
  52. Ibid., 205.
  53. Ibid., 210.
  54. Instruction from Maria Theresia for Bohemia, 16 July 1748, in Ibid., 2:211–220.
  55. Dickson, *Finance and Government*, 2:22.
  56. Haugwitz, Presentation for Hauptsystema, Summer 1748, in Kretschmayr, Kallbrunner, and Winkler, *Die Österreichische Zentralverwaltung*, 2:225–228, 226.
  57. Haugwitz, Presentation for Hauptsystema, 4 November 1748, in Ibid., 2:238–246, 238.
  58. Ibid., 240–243.
  59. Ibid., 241.
  60. Ibid., 241.
  61. Rescript of Maria Theresia, 15 January 1749, in Ibid., 2:261–262.
  62. Letter from Maria Theresia to Harrach, 2 May 1749, in Ibid., 2:269–270.
  63. Letter from Maria Theresia to Uhlfeld, 2 May 1749, in Ibid., 2:272–273.
  64. *Wienerisches Diarum*, no. 39 (May 1749): Extra-Blatt.

65. Ibid.
66. Ibid.
67. Section of Diary of Khevenhüller, in Kretschmayr, Kallbrunner, and Winkler, *Die Österreichische Zentralverwaltung*, 2:286.
68. Letter from Maria Theresia to Haugwitz, 2 May 1749, in Ibid., 2: 270–272, 272.
69. J. Kallbrunner, *Kaiserin Maria Theresias politisches Testament* (Munich: Oldenbourg, 1952), 21.
70. Memorandum of Maria Theresia “Aus mütterlicher Wohlmeinung . . . verfaßte Instructions-Puncta”, 1750-1751, in F. Walter, ed., *Maria Theresia: Briefe und Aktenstücke in Auswahl* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1968), 63–97, 64.
71. Ibid., 66.
72. Ibid., 71.
73. Ibid., 75.
74. Ibid., 80.
75. It is quite striking that she does not mention the Peace of Aachen of 1748 that finally ended the Austrian War of Succession but acknowledges the peace of 1745 by which the loss of Silesia was formally accepted. A reason for that may be that despite the criticism of her ministers, it was not her intention to criticise every minister at court. The Peace of Aachen was mainly negotiated by Wenzel Anton von Kaunitz-Rietberg, who became member of the advising counsel (Geheimrat) shortly before the memorandum and later took the office of the state chancellor in charge of foreign policy. Criticising him would have meant criticising herself, as it was her choice to bring him into that position.
76. Memorandum of Maria Theresia, 1750-1751, in Walter, *Briefe und Aktenstücke*, 65.
77. Ibid., 93.
78. Ibid., 93.
79. Ibid., 97.
80. Ibid., 75–76; “Die Ministri haben den bei dem Landesfürsten praeferenter vor anderen erworbenen Credit ferner dahin auch angewendet, umb jenes Land, deme sie vorgesetzt und darinnen begütert waren, dermaßen zu begünstigen, daß die andere Erblande andurch gedrucket und gleichsam angesehen worden, als wann selbige frembde Länder wären und nicht einem Herrn gehörten. Dieses war die einzige Ursach, wodurch ehender in das Klare gekommen und nach und nach meine messures genommen, die völlige Abänderung in der Regierungsform vorzunehmen.”
81. Ibid., 95.
82. Ibid., 76.
83. Ibid., 95.
84. Ibid., 95.
85. Anonymous, *Princeps in Compendio: Das ist: Etliche Kurtze zusammengefasste Puncte oder Regeln, Welche ein Regent bey seiner Regierung zu beobachten nöthig hat* (s.l.: s.n., 1701), 12.
86. A. Coreth, *Pietas Austriaca: Österreichische Frömmigkeit im Barock* (Munich: Oldenbourg, 1982), 9.
87. Memorandum of Maria Theresia, 1750-1751, in Walter, *Briefe und Aktenstücke*, 82.
88. Ibid., 83.
89. Anonymous, *Princeps in Compendium*, 12.

90. Memorandum of Maria Theresia, 1750/1751, in Walter, *Briefe und Aktenstücke*, 64.
91. Ibid., 93.
92. E. Wolgast, “Reform”, in *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe: Historisches Lexikon zur politisch-sozialen Sprache in Deutschland*, ed. O. Brunner, W. Conze, and R. Koselleck (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1984), 339–340.
93. Memorandum of Maria Theresia, 1750/1751, in Walter, *Briefe und Aktenstücke*, 93.
94. Ibid.
95. Venturi, *Old Regime in Europe*, 2:617.
96. Scott, *Enlightened absolutism*, 17–18.
97. Cerman, *Habsburgischer Adel*, 219.
98. Ibid., 223.
99. J.G. Justi, *Auf höchsten Befehl . . . erstattetes Gutachten von dem vernünftigen Zusammenhange und praktischen Vortrage aller öconomicchen und Cameralwissenschaften*, (Leipzig: s.n., 1754), 48.
100. Ibid., 49.
101. Ibid., 51–52.
102. Ibid., 52–53.
103. Ibid., 67–73.
104. Ibid., 75.
105. Ibid.
106. Ibid., 76.
107. Ibid., 77.
108. Ibid., 77.
109. Ibid., 77–78.
110. Ibid., 79.
111. Ibid., 60.
112. F. von Moser, *Der Herr und der Diener geschildert mit patriotischer Freyheit* (Frankfurt am Main: Raspe, 1759), 5.
113. Ibid.
114. H.M. Scott, “Introduction: The Problem of Enlightened Absolutism”, in *Enlightened Absolutism: Reform and Reformers in Later Eighteenth-Century Europe*, ed. H.M. Scott (Hounds mills: Macmillan, 1990), 1–37, 11.
115. Heidenheimer, “Moser, Friedrich Carl Freiherr von”, *Allgemeine Deutsche Biographie*, no. 22 (1885): 764–783. [www.deutsche-biographie.de/pnd118737074.html#adbcontent](http://www.deutsche-biographie.de/pnd118737074.html#adbcontent).
116. Moser, *Der Herr und der Diener*, 79.
117. Wolgast, “Reform”, 341.
118. Moser, *Der Herr und der Diener*, 79–80.
119. Scott, *Enlightened Absolutism*, 17.
120. Szabo, Kaunitz, 80.
121. G. Lettner, *Das Spannungsfeld zwischen Aufklärung und Absolutismus: Die Ära Kaunitz (1749–1794)* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2016), 33–34.
122. Kaunitz, Presentation at court for improvement of the Hauptsystem, 6 August 1758, in H. Kretschmayr, J. Kallbrunner, and M. Winkler, eds., *Die Österreichische Zentralverwaltung: 2. Abteilung Von der Vereinigung der österreichischen und böhmischen Hofkanzlei bis zur Einrichtung der Ministerialverfassung (1749–1848)* (Wien: Holzhausen, 1934), 3:136–152, 1–3, 1.
123. Ibid.
124. Ibid., 2.
125. H.M. Scott, “Reform in the Habsburg Monarchy, 1740–1790”, in *Enlightened Absolutism: Reform and Reformers in Later Eighteenth-Century Europe*, ed. H.M. Scott (Hounds mills: Macmillan, 1990), 145–188, 156.

126. Kaunitz, Presentation at court for foundation of the Staatsrat, 9 December 1760, in Kretschmayr, Kallbrunner, and Winkler, *Die Österreichische Zentralverwaltung*, 3:3–10, 4.
127. Ibid., 3.
128. Ibid., 5.
129. Ibid.
130. Ibid.
131. Ibid.
132. Ibid., 6–7.
133. Letter from Maria Theresia to Haugwitz, 14 December 1760, in Ibid., 3:12–13.
134. Agenda of the Staatsrat, 26 January 1761, in Ibid., 3:15–26, 16.
135. Ibid., 16–17.
136. *Wienerisches Diarium*, no. 8 (January 1761): Mittwochsanhang.
137. Ibid.
138. Ibid.
139. Ibid.
140. Dickson, *Finance and Government*, 1:240–244.
141. Stollberg-Rillinger, *Maria Theresia*, 243–244.
142. Scott, *Enlightened Absolutism*, 159–160.
143. H. Liebel-Weckowicz, “Auf der Susche nach neuer Autorität: Raison d’Etat in den Verwaltungs- und Rechtsreformen Maria Theresia und Josephs II.”, in *Österreich im Europa der Aufklärung* (Wien: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1985), 1:339–364.

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## 6 Reform as *Verbesserung*

### Argumentative Patterns and the Role of Models in German Cameralism

*Susan Richter*

#### Point of Departure

In 1750 the Imperial Count of Promnitz's Amtmann in charge of economy, Johann Georg Leopoldt (died after 1750), published his book *Nützliche und auf die erfahrung gegründete einleitung zu der landwirthschafft* [sic] wherein he asks his reader about sources of wealth aside from agriculture:

Denn wo ist ein Monarch [sic] auf Erden, der nicht des Landbaues benötiget? Woher könnte derselbe seinen glorieusen Thron so prächtig zieren? Wodurch würden sie eine solche erstaunende und so kostbare Hoffstadt, Tafeln und Armeen erhalten können? Wenn nicht alles doch größtentheils aus ihren Cammern, und also von der Wirthschaft und dem Nutzen des Landbaues herrühre. Eines jeglichen Menschen Lebens=Unterhalt, er sey Adlichen=Bürger=oder Bauer=Standes, röhret nur allein nächst Gott von einer ordentlichen Wirthschaft her.<sup>1</sup>

Nonetheless, he dejectedly points out that a large part of the Old Empire's population neither works nor prays.

The situation he describes is that of a century-old discrepancy between the food-consuming scores, which do not produce anything, and the food-producing scores, the farmers. This situation resulted in food scarcity, which, when worsened by natural disasters, crop failures, and antiquated production methods, often lead to famine. These famines occurred particularly in the Holy Roman Empire and affected the farmers above all else.

From the 1750s onward, the German economic school of Cameralism specifically aimed at elevating agriculture into a science and the affairs of farmers into a matter of state. Cameralists discussed the importance of the food-consuming scores in comparison to the food-producing scores. One such author, Johann Gottlob Justi (1717–1771),<sup>2</sup> aspired to describe

the state as a machine and factory respectively. His goal was the economisation of state activity.<sup>3</sup>

## Aim of the Essay

In his political-economic writings, Justi wanted to provide advice and reminders due to necessary improvements (*wegen nöthiger Verbesserungen thun*<sup>4</sup>). He did not use the term *reform*,<sup>5</sup> instead talking about improvement (*Verbesserung*).

My first thesis is that Justi understood and employed the term *Verbesserung* as a judicial norm and term. As a result, the proposed changes were intended to take place methodically, structured as a legislative process and both initiated and defended by the ruling class. This turned it into a political process with a high degree of commitment towards reforms that was to ensure the perpetuation of *Verbesserung*. The following essay will explain the advantage of understanding *Verbesserung* in a judicial sense. To do so it is necessary to spotlight the concrete roles of the monarch and the increasingly impersonal state as legislator and actor of change. *Verbesserung* needs to be questioned as a governmental principle and regulating process by contemporary authorities. The aim is to show that according to Justi reform processes should be carried out within the framework of the state. They should employ tools of the state such as the gathering of knowledge and the creation of legislation and state institutions to structure and perform these reforms. Agriculture would only receive the freedom for development through regulating *Verbesserung*.<sup>6</sup>

My second thesis is that *Verbesserung* implies the understanding of urgent problems of that time. According to contemporary perceptions, the problems ailing agriculture were under-regulation and an asymmetry in both the societal acceptance of agriculture and the economic support of it. These deficits first had to be analysed, suitable role models had to be found, and changes had to be both justified and communicated to the rulers. As a result, actors in society did not only initiate reforms but also defined their content. Thus, the following has to be asked:

- How did the necessary improvement need to be explained?
- What could provide support in this regard?

*Languages of reform* cannot be examined without *strategies of reform*.<sup>7</sup> It is assumed that the Cameralistic explanations of the necessity and the possibility of improvements were based on models which were intentionally constructed. My aim is to prove that the construction of these models happened in the tension between the old and the new as well as the familiar and the unfamiliar. The fourth thesis is that the visible and provable success of the unfamiliar model and the similarity of the

successful unfamiliar model with the familiar were requirements to even be considered as a model.

### *Verbesserung* (Reform) as a Legal Action

The German history of concepts (*Begriffsgeschichte*) and historical semantics uses *Verbesserung* as a research category and a pedagogical term, yet leaves it very vague.<sup>8</sup> In contrast, this chapter will introduce an additional contemporary usage of the term which has received much less scholarly attention: that of a legal term describing both theoretical and practical action. Johann Heinrich Zedler's (1706–1751) *Universal-Lexikon* defines *Verbesserung* as a legal term stemming from Justinian law: *Verbesserung* (*emendatio, correctio*):

heißt überhaupt eine jede Bemühung, eine schlimme Sache gut zu machen, oder die daran bemerkenswerten Fehler und Gebrechen abzustellen, und sie in einen vollkommenen Stand, als sie bisher gewesen, zu setzen. So wird dieses Wort in denen Rechten gar öfters vor eine mäßige und vernünftige Züchtigung oder Ahndung derer begangenen Übelthaten, oder vor die Ausmerzung und Abschaffung derer übeln Sitten und Gewohnheiten gebraucht. . . . Bisweilen aber wird das Wort Verbesserung auch vor die völlige Veränderung einer Sache . . . genommen.<sup>9</sup>

When Zedler registers *Verbesserung* as a legal term it implies that the process and the result of the *correctio* and the change connected to it are a task that creates and enforces law and whose outcome needs to be legally binding. Due to their legislative authority this called specifically upon the monarchs and sovereigns in the territories of the Holy Roman Empire to restore order. Reform as *Verbesserung* therefore meant *correctio* towards another state of things that was less dysfunctional – ideally even a change along the lines of a perfect state – as well as the change of previous standards through edicts and mandates. Legal systems and persons thus were not seen as immutable in the contemporaries' eyes; instead, they necessarily had to be adjustable. Change took place through the modification of norms and measures regulating norms. The usage of *Verbesserung* as a legal term thus promised that the monarch's and the state's mechanisms of negotiation, supervision, and enforcement would still be available; even in spite of the accompanying change which could lead to societal upheaval. This meant that social and political stability<sup>10</sup> could be secured and that no part of society could resist the changes of the *Verbesserung*.

This is why Justi recommended the adaptation of a strategy regarding the communication of laws to his subjects to his sovereignty in his 1755 published treatise *Anweisung zu einer guten deutschen Schreibart*. In this

work he urged an improvement in the sphere of language (*Verbesserung der Sprache*), especially in terms of clarity and thoroughness (*Gründlichkeit und Deutlichkeit*) as far as official written communication with his subjects is concerned.<sup>11</sup> He argues that edicts and mandates should insistently explain that they are being released out of love towards the subjects, and in order to combat specific ills and bad habits that were causing harm to them, they should contain

eine Einleitung, . . . die klarstellt, dass das Gesetz aus Vorsorge und Liebe des Regenten vor seine Unterthanen handelt, und wie er geneigt sei, zu ihrer Glückseligkeit und zu dem Aufnehmen seiner Staaten alle dienlichen Maßregeln zu ergreifen. Sodann folgt der Vortrag selbst. Es wird nämlich die Sache oder Ursache vorgestellt, die zu[r] Abfassung des Edikts oder der Anordnung Gelegenheit gegeben hat. Diese sind entweder die eingeschlichene Mißbräuche und Unordnungen, oder der Nachtheil, welchen diese oder jene Umstände dem Lande verursachten.<sup>12</sup>

Laws inducing changes should explain their necessity clearly and exhaustively and lay out the *Verbesserungen* they would bring about. This justification and its intelligibility should strengthen the bond between the ruler and the ruled in a process of reform through law-making, without belittling the importance of the topic.<sup>13</sup>

Andreas Görgen highlights the German Enlightenment's attempt to strengthen the relationship between word and object in the legal language in order to guarantee the clarity and intelligibility of legal terms and laws.<sup>14</sup> Justi's use of the term *Verbesserung* must be understood in this context. He followed Zedler's understanding of reform as a lawful and legally binding *Verbesserung* or a change of a situation through the sovereign using edicts and the legislative power. In the first volume of his *Historische und juristische Schriften* (published in 1760) he emphasises that problems would not occur due to divine intention but were rather caused by human beings and, thus, could only be resolved by them. In his view, philanthropy was the drive to change, a change that would improve the common welfare:

So müßte man entweder keine Menschenliebe haben, oder man müßte von der Wohlfahrt eines gemeinen Wesens einen wunderlichen Begriff haben, wenn man nicht einsehen wolte [sic], daß eine . . . Verbesserung der Rechte unumgänglich nöthig wäre. . . . Man hat die Beschaffenheit unserer Rechte und Prozesse vor ein Verderben der Republick und eine Landplage gehalten, womit uns Gott um unserer Sünde willen züchtiget. Vernünftige Menschen haben darüber bittere Seufzer ausgestossen, und alle diejenige, welchen die Wohlfahrt des menschlichen Geschlechts wahrhaftig lieb gewesen ist, haben

gewünschet, diejenige glückseligen Zeiten zu erleben, welche diese Änderung darstellen würden.<sup>15</sup>

## Actors in the Reform Process

It should have become clear to whom Justi attributed the power to declare a situation to be untenable (*schlimm*) or flawed: to the sovereign. This results from the authority and the freedom granted by the sovereign's position to initiate reforms and *Verbesserungen*. The monarch thus became the recipient of any communication regarding existing problems as well as the initiator of change, while the public administration (*Polizey*) was the executive organ and the supervisor of reforms or *Verbesserungen* only. In so doing Justi drew heavily on the traditional role of the monarch as the *princeps* and *primus*,<sup>16</sup> which he tried to revive within the context of his ideas. He needed the sovereign as the head of the state functioning as the carrier of his ideas. In trying both to communicate and to realise theoretical knowledge Justi employed a target-means-carrier relationship, a concept that was only formalised into a model in 20th century economic sciences: the target-means-carrier system (Ziel-Mittel-Träger-System). The target-means-carrier relationship is supposed to bring the current situation (actual condition) closer to the target (intended condition) by using suitable tools. Ideally the intended condition was even to be achieved.<sup>17</sup> Justi's contemporaries were actually already familiar with this concept. Parallel to Justi, Jacob Friedrich von Bielfeld (1717–1770) had already reflected on the most promising protagonists and methods of change in his 1760/61 work *Institutions Politiques*.<sup>18</sup> Assuming common welfare to be the main goal of a state, Bielfeld, too, identified the sovereign, the bureaucracy, and the institutions of the state as the principal agents that were to implement reforms. This implied the applicability of theoretical suggestions and the corresponding practical philosophy. This is why Bielfeld required concepts by means of which he could evaluate potential obstacles and adjust the necessary efforts and instruments to overcome them.

In the run-up to the legal shaping of reforms or *Verbesserungen*, however, change and its indispensability had to be communicated initially to the sovereign. In accordance with Justi's conception this was a task of all perceptive subjects caring about the common good, especially for the scientifically educated ones or those who were employed in public administration.

Justi's contemporaries did not develop a special term for the act of reforming and therefore did not call themselves "reformers". Yet they understood themselves nonetheless as a part of a community of shared values and ideas, being socially or politically responsible and committed to the *Bonum commune*. This culminated in the development of a common language that found expression in terms like *Verbesserung*, *etwas*

*bliihend zu machen* or *in Flohr setzen*, to heal (*heilen*) an unfortunate state, *einem Beyspiele nach[zu]ahmen* or *sich wieder nach alten und loblichen Gewohnheiten zu richten*. For those who saw themselves as initiators of reforms, these terms played an important role in communicating the necessity of reform and the use of examples, as it will be shown in the following survey.

In Justi's eyes administrators should no longer be the ruler's mere traditional backbone (*Säulen der Obrigkeit*) within an immutable state architecture. Instead, they should be the architects of a malleable reform process that varied in accordance with subjects' needs as well as in line with the knowledge available. Being a former administrator, he aimed at establishing a cooperation between the developing German states, their monarchs, and a meritocratic elite in order to accelerate reforms and eliminate existing grievances in all areas of life. In his works Justi did not only communicate what he perceived to be helpful criticism but also a framework of identification between the principality, the Empire, and the bureaucracy on both levels.<sup>19</sup>

During the middle of the 18th century, scientists and practical philosophers felt obligated to an ethos of *prudentia civilis*. They requested their contemporaries to actively accept responsibility for present events by, amongst other things, mirroring them. True to Justi, administrators had an obligation to use their office and their knowledge for the overall benefit of the state. This also included voicing criticism and proposals of positive change.<sup>20</sup> As a citizen and administrator (even if he was without office at the time)<sup>21</sup> Justi felt under a patriotic obligation to cavil at the current situation and make proposals of reform. Correspondingly, he in his *Vergleichungen*:

Aber auch ein jeder einzelner [sic] Untertan muß unstreitig das Recht haben, seinem Regenten über die Fehler und Gebrechen in der Regierung Vorstellung zu thun. Er ist ein Mitglied der bürgerlichen Gesellschaft; und sein eigenes Wohl und Weh ist mit der Glückseligkeit oder Nachtheil dieser Gesellschaft auf das allerengste verbunden.<sup>22</sup>

He found an example for this ideal in China: *Es war . . . einem jeden Mandarin erlaubet, dem Kayser seiner Fehler wegen Erinnerung zu thun, dafern es nur mit derjenigen Vorsicht geschieht, welche die tiefe Ehrfurcht erfordert, die man gegen ihn trägt.*<sup>23</sup>

Even before Justi, Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz (1664–1716), Georg Bernhard Bilfinger (1693–1750), and Christian Wolff (1679–1754) had praised the “Teachings of political ethics” of the Chinese mandarins, performing practical work, busying themselves as scholars and being watchful critics of the interests of the state.<sup>24</sup> This drove authors such as Justi, who had chosen the position between practical and scholarly work, to share their knowledge for purpose of reform. Chinese administrators

disseminated both moral and practical knowledge to the population. They were able to “enlighten the people, not to undermine the well-being of the empires, but to secure it through the sciences and morals on the foundation-stone of genuine humanity”.<sup>25</sup> Justi saw his task in initiating *Verbesserungen* as well as laying out the path to realise them.

He attempted in his *Vergleichungen* to give rulers instructions to regulate societal and political life more thoroughly and make it less random. Especially the established ignorance and lack of interest of princes in topics such as agriculture and the situation of farmers required instruction to turn them into the opposite.<sup>26</sup> To do so, the princes’ gaze had to be directed onto a role model which he was supposed to follow. Referring to God’s eye, contemporary thinking had it that eye and vision were the most important symbols of political scholarship and enlightenment of mundane rulers. Thus, the princely eye<sup>27</sup> had to be augmented by the lens of a spyglass in order to direct his gaze onto the foreign object and the new realm of experience: China.

### The Search for the Foreign and Yet-So-Familiar Role Model: China

Since, as I have shown, alternatives to the precarious situation in Europe were necessary, looking at other, apparently successfully governed states seemed beneficial. In his *Vergleichungen* Justi writes that he wants to make an effort to set aside European pride and prejudice towards other societies and compare them to Europe in order to get a more clear-cut picture of Europe:

Ich habe einen großen Vorsatz gefasset. Ich will mich bemühen, in verschiedenen Werken die hohe Einbildung zumäßigen [sic], die wir Europäer von uns selbst haben. Ich mache hier den Anfang, indem ich die Beschaffenheit der Europäischen Regierungen, mit dem Regierungszustande der Asiatischen und anderer vermeintlich Barbarischer Völker in Vergleichung stelle. . . . Es ist unmöglich, dass wir an eine Menge von Schwachheiten, Gebrechlichkeiten und verzehrenden Krankheiten, die unseren Welttheil siech und elend machen, Hand anlegen können, um sie nach und nach zu heilen; wenn wir Europäer nicht vor allen Dingen uns selbst kennen lernen.<sup>28</sup>

By means of these comparisons Justi intended to direct the princes’ attention – thus that of the actors of reform – to the history and contemporary present of China, especially towards the Chinese model of rulership and the actions of the Chinese emperors. Choosing the example of the Chinese emperors seemed to be justified since their equivalent rank to European monarchs and their enormous power were accepted and indisputable in Europe.<sup>29</sup>

Christian Wolff had already gushed about the immense impact that the emperors' examples have had on both their successors and their subjects: *Daher sehen wir, daß die Chinesen die glänzenden Beispiele der Kaiser und der Philosophen anstelle von Regeln verwendeten.*<sup>30</sup>

Why should this not be applicable to German or European princes? All the more since Chinese history, which was available to European readers thanks to the efforts of Jesuits, seemed to show parallels to European enlightened conceptions of history. Human history as understood by German Enlightenment historians was a succession of developmental phases that were steadily approaching perfection of humanity. The same process of perfecting humanity could be seen in the history of the Chinese monarchy, with an increasing domestic dynamic and institutional stability over centuries. As specified by Justi, foreign history turned out to be a good teacher as, in this case, Chinese history and present provided him with a pool of examples he could use to argue in favour of the demanded agricultural reforms. The next task was therefore to develop a functioning model of agriculture enabled by active monarchical economic action, which would also be persuasive to the monarchs of the German territories.

## Model Making as Strategies of *Verbesserung*

As an opening of this section, it appears fruitful to ask certain elemental questions related to the term *model* itself: How did contemporaries even understand it? How did Justi shape his agricultural model, and, subsequently, how did he communicate it to his readership?

Model making was actually a method that had a long tradition that dated back to the mirrors for princes in the 16th and 17th centuries. Within these, a princely example was turned into a role model worthy for practical imitation. In his *Vergleichungen*, Justi also crafts a new model of ruling for a new, future-oriented form of statehood. He uses the role of the Chinese monarch as a *quarry* and as a pattern of legitimization regarding his concept, with the help of which he tries to put new agricultural reforms in place. The ploughing monarch grew into a role model for the economically educated prince acting in accordance with that knowledge. It even evolved into a model for a new concept of rulership, considering the monarch to be the First Farmer of the state.

Zedler's *Universal-Lexicon* defines *Modell* in the sense of a guideline, an example or a sample. Following Zedler, it helps to define certain assumptions: *Richtschnur, Vorbild und Muster. Es . . . dient ein Modell, den Begriff [von etwas] deutlicher zu machen.*<sup>31</sup> Actually, Zedler's definition turns out to be a word-for-word quotation from Christian Wolff.<sup>32</sup> The connotations of headword *Modell*, as a matter of fact, come up with an excellent approach to the better understanding of *Verbesserung*.

A fundamental requirement for Justi's model making can be found in Christian Wolff's concept of the *Witz* (*ingenium/wit*) as a possibility to create awareness or a linkage between subjects. He identified *Witz* (wit) to be the driving force behind the discovery of truths and the development of metaphors,<sup>33</sup> allegories, and tropes:

Man sieht aus den gegebenen Exempeln, dass man einen Fall in den anderen verkehret wegen der Ähnlichkeit, die sie miteinander gemein haben. Und gehört demnach zu hurtigem Gebrauche des Grundes der Verkehrung, dass man die Ähnlichkeit leicht wahrnehmen kann. Wer hierzu aufgelegt ist, den nennet man sinnreich. Und die Leichtigkeit, die Ähnlichkeit wahrzunehmen, ist eigentlich dasjenige, was wir *Witz* heißen. Also gehört außer der Kunst zu schließen zum Erfinden auch *Witz*, und man kann ohne diesen durch jene allein nicht zu rechte kommen.<sup>34</sup>

Similarities existed where fundamental properties were the same. This identity did not exist separately but was a result of perception.<sup>35</sup> Similarities helped to perceive common attributes in different objects. From this it followed that similarities could lead to further associations and thus provide a heuristic function that helps to gain insight.

As Wolff, Justi likewise examined David Hume's (1711–1776) association theory, which he expresses in his *Philosophical Essays Concerning Human Understanding* in 1748.<sup>36</sup> Hume was fascinated by Isaac Newton's (1643–1727) law of gravitation (the gravitational force of attraction between two bodies is directly proportional to the product of their masses), because of the powerful systems it created. The principle is based on the similar behaviour of orbs and earthly objects. Hume transferred this principle into the realm of ideas, which, according to him, can wield influence on each other. Owing to the ideas' similarity, they can be combined and, consequently, become a manifestation of the emergence of new systems. He assumed that ideas get in contact with each other through their resemblance. The crucial element here is association. According to him associations are the only concept governing intellectual order. Beside one's mind, however, emotions also provide important insights. The imagination creates associations based in thoughts and ideas. Resemblance was very important to Hume as it eased the association between ideas and objects. The bigger the resemblance the stronger the association; or the lesser the resemblance the weaker the association. Association in turn can lead to three possible principles:

- either to a conceptual relation between two objects or ideas,
- to a change of ideas, or
- to an increase or reduction of contents of ideas.<sup>37</sup>

The recognition of resemblance between ideas, objects, and actions is still an essential foundation for the successful construction of models today. Resemblance does not only support trust in these constructions but also helps to understand the model. Resemblance creates the belief that an idea of a foreign cultural sphere is associated with similar values and, therefore, does not only support the model but also assists with its understanding and fills the perceived needs.

Referring to Wolff and Hume it was easy for Justi to establish an intellectual connection between the ideals of patriarchal rulership existing in both the European and the Chinese traditions. He did so in order to develop his concept of the economisation of sovereignty. In referring to Hume's theory, Justi combined the known European terminology of *pater patriae* with the foreign Chinese concept of paternal rulership (object b) and subsumed them under the known European term *pater patriae*.

Justi used a demonstrative method of presenting familiar examples in a new framework to show his readers the similarities. He connected the familiar concepts of *patria potestas* and the economic concepts of *pater familias* and *pater patriae* with the foreign concepts of the *hsiao-principle* (which he apparently did not understand correctly and therefore misapplied), filial piety, and the importance of agriculture in official rites. Based on the assumption of analogy, Justi theorised that the European and Chinese traditions of paternal rule were the same. Using the existing terminology and understanding of paternal rule, he derived the concept of *identitas* from Wolff's ideas.<sup>38</sup>

Justi enthusiastically pointed out to his readers how successful paternal rule was in China and what deficits still existed in Europe:

Ihre [the Chinese] Herrschaftskunst beruht ganz allein auf diesem herrlichen Grundsatz, dass der Kaiser als der Vater seiner Untertanen, und Sina als eine grosse Familie zu betrachten sey. Dieser Grundsatz giebt nicht allein das schönste Bild von der Monarchischen Regierung, sondern die wesentliche Eigenschaft derselben soll auch in der That darinnen bestehen. . . . Wir Europäer würden demnach große Barbaren seyn, wenn wir nicht Beispiele von Königen gehabt hätten, die wahre Väter ihres Volkes gewesen wären. Allein diese Beispiele sind überaus selten.<sup>39</sup>

In his reception of the Chinese understanding of paternal rule he proceeded very selectively and only recorded parts Chinese monarch's characteristics: the absolute power of the sovereign and paternal love as the motivation to rule. Aside from that he enquired into the Chinese concepts of rulership and looked for ideas that corresponded with the European concept of *pater familias*. Subsequently, he endeavoured to extend the European concept of paternal rule in order to include the important economical components that were part of the Chinese traditions (the role

of the emperor in the promotion of agriculture and the importance of agriculture to the state). Justi strongly emphasised concepts of power politics that had economical repercussions. However, he also completely ignored negative aspects and failures of Chinese rule in cases of famine. Already in 1758, in the second edition of his *Staatswirtschaft*, he wrote that Europe could feed three to four times as many inhabitants if the correct policies were promoted:

Wenn wir lernen wollen, wie der Boden eines Landes recht zu nutzen ist, so müssen wir nach Sina gehen, wo eben die Menge der Menschen Erfindungen an die Hand gegeben hat, die höchsten Gipfel der Berge und steilsten Felsen zu fruchtbaren Feldern zu machen. Man kann dannhero mit Gründlichkeit behaupten, daß die am meisten bevölkerten Länder in Europa noch drey und viermal so viel Einwohner ernähren können, wenn sie alles Getreide im Lande behalten, solches nicht unnütze verbrauchen, die Oeconomie recht in Flor bringen, und alle Plätze und Gegenden nutzen wollten.<sup>40</sup>

As a result of this assessment he strongly distanced himself from Montesquieu's view of the efficiency of Chinese agriculture.<sup>41</sup> According to Justi's way of thinking, China could serve as a role model as it had retained the close link between agriculture and rule well into the present – aside from the awareness of how useful agriculture was to the state and society:

[E]s feuert sie auch die Hochachtung dazu an, in welcher der Ackerbau stehet, und die besondere Ehre, die den Ackerleuten von der ersten Gründung dieses Reichs her von den Kaisern erwiesen worden. Es ist dies eine gemeine Meinung, die ihnen von einem ihrer ersten Kaiser, namens Chin-nong [Shennong], beygebracht worden; und sie verehren denselben noch diese Stunde, als den Erfinder dieser den Völkern so erspieslichen Kunst.<sup>42</sup>

Agriculture and rulership figuratively united in one of China's first monarchs who had introduced and taught the secrets of agriculture to his people. In Justi's understanding, agriculture stemmed from a historical rather than from a mythical ruler, whose achievement was to instruct his people in the importance of agriculture. In China rulership was therefore intimately connected to the instruction of subjects and had, in contrast to Europe, not become estranged from it.

In order to maintain this connection, the monarch had to offer orientation by setting a good example since the aim was to turn the ignorance towards agricultural matters among the European nations into its support. The final goal was to embed agriculture in the consciousness of society and, over the long term, to make it into a principle of the

state's tasks. As far as the role model function of the Chinese emperor is concerned, the best example is the yearly ploughing ritual that was performed by himself:

Jedes Frühjahr hat der Kaiser nach dem Exempel seiner ältesten Vorfahren die Gewohnheit, daß er unter gewissen Solennitäten einige Furchen höchst eigenhändig gräbet, um durch sein Exempel die Leuthe zum Ackerbau aufzumuntern. Eben diese Ceremonie beobachten die Mandarinen jedes Ortes. Der jetzt regierende Kaiser Yong-tching<sup>43</sup> [Yongzheng] machte gleich nach geendigter Trauerzeit bekannt, daß er sich alle Jahre nach dieser alten und löblichen Gewohnheit richten wolle.<sup>44</sup>

Justi followed this up with quoting the exact sequence of the yearly imperial ritual ploughing as described in Père Contancin's letter from 1727.

Regarding the adoption of descriptions from travel literature, both a reduction and an overemphasis of certain contents supporting his argumentation can be identified. As a result he provided a conception of rulership of the Chinese emperors that showed an emphasised economic orientation. It is a construction and a view of the Chinese emperor's exercise of power which was never formulated in this way, but it was quite similar to essential European ideas of the *pater familias* (object c). Thereby Justi created a model of it that suited his aim (the *explanandum*), which, in turn, was deduced from foreign as well as familiar European terms and images.

The ploughing ritual as performed by the Chinese emperors seemed an example of demonstrative teaching to Justi that did not rely on repetition and explanation of knowledge in an oral or written form and could easily be understood by everyone.<sup>45</sup> Contemporaries such as the authors of Zedler's encyclopaedia understood a demonstration, as the ritual was one, to be a lesson experienced by the senses. Within Zedler's the term demonstration is defined as an opportunity to verify or to confirm as hypothesis that most sensual experiences agree with.<sup>46</sup> Here, Zedler's *Universal-Lexicon* followed Wolff's Aristotelian understanding of science as the ability to demonstrate something (*Scientia est habitus demonstrandi*).<sup>47</sup> At the same time the demonstration was a bridge between theoretical knowledge and experiencing knowledge. In this context demonstrations played a significant role within Justi's line of reasoning, because he had understood the strong symbolism of this act carried out by the Chinese emperor in the presence of his subjects. This is why he described it as painstakingly as he did: It should animate German princes and European sovereigns to follow their Chinese counterpart's lead. Though he emphasised the overall message according to which the monarch ought to be the First Farmer in the state in order to promote agriculture more strongly,

Justi did not formulate an explicit request for monarchs to personally engage in agricultural work and to thus follow the Chinese emperor. In his *Vergleichungen* he writes that the combination of high societal standing, personal interest of the monarch, and low taxes constituted the decisive reason why Chinese agriculture was so much more prosperous than European ones:

Wenn man alle diese Merkzeichen der Hochachtung erwäget, was die Sinesischen Kaiser durch diese Feyerlichkeiten (the ploughing ritual) und Gesetze vor den Ackerbau zu erkennen geben; wenn man hinzusetzt, daß die Landleute in Sina einen ansehnlichen Rang unter den Ständen und Classen des Volkes haben . . . , und wenn man endlich bemerket, daß die Landleute in Sina weder unter allzu großen Abgaben, noch anderen Arten der Bedrückung seufzen, so darf man sich nicht wundern, daß dieses alles seine Wirkung thut, und der Ackerbau daselbst mehr in Flohr ist, als in allen anderen Staaten des Erdkreises.<sup>48</sup>

He concluded that the Chinese government was aware of the importance of agriculture with regard to the state: *Die weise chinesische Regierung hat die Wichtigkeit des Ackerbaus und die Hochachtung, in welcher er stehen muß, sehr wohl eingesehen.*<sup>49</sup> Justi's insight was that the Chinese emperors were not only aware of the needs of all parts of their population but they were also interested in securing their material well-being, especially the acquisition of food. This is why he suggested to the European princes to follow in the Chinese emperor's footsteps: *dem Beyspiele des Sinesischen Kaysers nach[zu]ahmen.*<sup>50</sup>

The European rulers thus received another function that he had taken from the Chinese conception of rulership: Aside from being the First Servant or the First Bureaucrat of the state, they were also supposed to be the First Farmer in corresponding countries. The monarch's field of action implied the inclusion of legislation to raise up the farmers' situation (*um den Nahrungsstand blühend zu machen*) and asked them to accept a new conception of rulership as outlined previously.<sup>51</sup>

We can therefore conclude the following about Justi's model:

- It was argumentatively linked to the established and known ideal of the *oikos* and his transfer on the *super oikos*.
- It implied crucial similarities with an economically interpreted concept of rulership as it was established – at least in the eyes of Justi and his informants – in China. Justi's model referred – from his point of view – to an existing, although foreign area and was therefore verifiable.
- The Chinese methods to reach state welfare were introduced and critically examined by Justi on whether they could be applied in the Old Empire.

China emerged almost logically as the winner from Justi's considerations. It approached a higher level of optimisation than all European states due to its economic and political knowledge of social order. The success of the conditions in China was the basis for Justi and, at the same time, the criterion to turn China into his model for success. However, his view of China was a construct which was based on a perceived reality and on its identified similarities with the ancient ideal of *pater familias*.

Justi wanted to look at the connection between the past and the present, where he observed that in a foreign culture a similar concept of an economised state with a monarch acting in paternal ways was successfully realised and existed contemporarily. Methodologically, Justi fancied the restoration of concepts stemming from antiquity – at least if they were still useful with regard to the present. A traditional understanding of reform based on the past only made sense for Justi if ideas of the past could successfully and verifiably be implemented in the present. *Verbesserung* thus meant a consideration of ancient and new ideas while trying to avoid friction and conflicts arising from their contents. It also meant orienting himself towards the world's most successful monarchical system: China.

## Justi's Language of Reform

For a Cameralist like Justi the goal of an agricultural reform was change, flexibility, and regulation. This is reflected in the employed language. Justi used metaphors and terms from a legal context (*correctio/Verbesserung*), the medical work of physicians (*heilen*), or the botanical sector (*etwas blühend zu machen* or *in Flohr zu setzen*). The botanical metaphor also refers to the 16th-century European personification of Reformation holding garden tools for pruning discussed in the preface of the volume.

These expressions became part of the political and administrative language of one of the most famous German Cameralists. For Justi, as a provider of ideas and an initiator of reform projects, they justified the necessity of legislative action in those areas seen as to be in need of reform.

These terms were, however, no new metaphors or neologisms. Rather, they were widely known and in a close connection to princely or state action. The physician's work of healing, for example, was seen as a princely skill. The "Prince as physician" was a known allocation by Niccolò Machiavelli (1469–1527) and other contemporaries. As Niccolò Machiavelli wrote in his 1532 published treatise *Il Principe*, the political evil of all kind is like the disease consumption. At the beginning it is easy to cure and hard to reveal but – after some time – it is easy to reveal and hard to cure. For Machiavelli, it is the same with state systems. Identified growing evils are easy to cure, but if they grow unidentified they become incurable. For Machiavelli, curing (*heilen*) is the duty of the prince. Justi identified the monarch or the state as active subjects in these terms.<sup>52</sup>

These terms of *Heilen* and *in Flohr setzen* etc., therefore, gained a new topicality in context of reforms. At the same time they included the message that the reforming work of a sovereign was not a new aspect in his idea of rulership. On the contrary, reforming work had always been a centrepiece of a prince's duty, which necessarily has to be carried out again. As an economically educated expert and official Justi solely claimed for himself to be the one who communicated the evils he identified and to demonstrate possible ways of reform.

Jacques Guilhaumou argued that the French Revolution was characterised by a new language (for the revolutionaries a language of truth). The monarchical language was, following Guilhaumou, characterised by recourses. The same conclusion can be taken through the analysis of Justi's language usage. Therefore, this result contradicts the findings of Andreas Bihrer and Dietmar Schiersner presented in their book *Reformverlierer 1000–1800. Zum Umgang mit Niederlagen in der europäischen Vormoderne*, published in 2017.<sup>53</sup> They assumed that social systems of language and action would be changed fundamentally by reforms and reformers because "ein Agieren mit dem bisherigen Sprech- und Handlungsmustern war nicht mehr möglich".<sup>54</sup> Additionally, according to Bihrer and Schiersner, new terms will gain acceptance.

These findings cannot be supported by this survey. On the contrary, it can be recognised that in the course of reforms traditional metaphors and known terms were still in use. However, the necessity and the suggestions for reform were communicated through well-known terms and samples like "erneut zur Ordnung bringen" (bringing in order again). The direction and the path for reforms did not change.

## Conclusion

Justi's goal was to define agriculture as a political field and to design a framework for state support of it. Justi's works on agriculture are therefore an important initiative. He argued in favour of the elevation of agriculture to a state science. A shortage of resources could be a major threat to both the domestic and the foreign policy related security of a state.<sup>55</sup> To him coordination and supervision of agriculture were part of the tasks of the *Polizey*, while the normative goals were part of *Polizeywissenschaft*.<sup>56</sup> The initiative for this, however, ought to start with the sovereign.

With his model Justi identified the target (improvement of agriculture), the means (extended understanding of rulership, legislation), and the carrier (sovereign) of the reform. His model also served as an instrument to convince the ruler, whom he had identified as the principal actor of reform, that these agricultural reforms were necessary. To do so he presented the example of China as a successful community without deficits and showed how success had been achieved there. China's success was based on the role of the emperor and successful legislation. Justi also

employed his model as a didactic tool of instruction as he states several times in his *Vergleiche*. Within it princely education and instruction are the foundation of good rulership.<sup>57</sup> Especially the existing ignorance or insufficient interest of princes with regard to a topic could be turned into the opposite using education.<sup>58</sup>

Justi therefore utilised his model within a strategy of communication to push reforms in the sense of *Verbesserungen* and convince the actors of reform. With this he pointed out deficits and existing crises to European and German monarchs. Rhetorically he worked to achieve his goal by focusing on the healing power of the *Verbesserung* and giving examples. His model helped the sovereigns to get their bearings and highlighted solutions to existing problems using familiar tools of rulership. His model was aimed to be as easily understood as possible and easy to be realised within the near future. It was therefore of great importance to Justi that his model was based on real experiences and, in so doing, was easily verifiable:

Es ist also gar kein bloßes Schattenbild, das ich in den meisten Vergleichungen zum Muster vorstelle. Es sind wirklich in der Welt stattfindende Regierungsverfassungen, welche, wenn sie in der That vorzüglicher sind, als die unsrigen, dem sich so weise dünkenden Europa billig eine gewisse Schamröthe zuziehen sollten.<sup>59</sup>

The verifiability of his comparisons was extremely important to Justi as he wanted his project to be realised. In this context it was fundamental that it actually could be put into practice. His model was very goal focused and could help to bring the German and European states closer to the Chinese ideal type.

The centrepiece of this chapter was Justi himself as a producer of arguments for *Verbesserung* regarding agriculture in the German territories and in Europe. For this purpose he developed – based on existing discourses on administration – a specific kind of knowledge and communication transfer to instruct rulers in his model on the importance of the ploughing performed by the emperor. With his model for *Verbesserung* he did in fact create a concept that would dominate the discourse of future agricultural and social reforms in the Empire. This concept aimed at a society in which every part helped in the creation of food and thus growth.

The growth of knowledge about foreign cultures opened up the possibility of comparison with the domestic situation, which was often inferior. The result of this comparison was a call for increased opportunities to effect change. Identifying similarities of structures and mechanisms for action in foreign societies when compared to European ones fuelled further investigations. These supposed similarities made it easier to draw comparisons and to integrate foreign knowledge into processes of reform and

change. Additionally, they promised feasibility, reduced risk, and allayed fears about the *Verbesserung*. This helped to curb the suspicions of both rulers and populations that these foreign concepts might be dangerous. The alleged similarity offered the hope that continuity could be maintained and alleviated fears of fragility, the possible failure, and even collapse of society. This was aided by the monarch if he put himself at the head of the reform process and initiated and controlled it through his most important tool: legislation. According to Justi reform processes had to happen under the leadership of the state. They were to be implemented using the state's tools and institutions such as the collection of knowledge and production of legislation and had to be based in sovereignty. The growth in knowledge from foreign cultures in a contemporary context increased the European knowledge of China, the willingness to undertake reforms, and, therefore, the exerted pressure on the authorities to implement them.

Only the justification of reforms changed in the 18th century by turning the focus upon non-European cultures. States, chosen as examples, were successful in transferring old traditions to the present. Consequently, they were deemed not to be in need of reform.

The applied strategies of argumentation and the employed terms for the justification of reform were adjusted in those cases where transcultural examples were used to find the most successful path of state reform. The process of reforming became a global or cross-cultural phenomenon. Zedler's *Universal-Lexicon* discussed the question about a possible *Sprach-Veränderung* (change in language) that occurred during the exchange with foreign cultures and peoples: *Die Erfindung neuer Dinge erfordert auch neue Worte; der Umgang mit anderen Völkern bringet entweder ebenfalls neue Worte oder verändert die alten.*<sup>60</sup> However, according to the definition of language change provided by Zedler's, as my paper shows, there was nothing newly invented but rather invoked by initiators of reforms like Justi in order to correct the existing false facilities. Also in his discussion about the Chinese inspired model, he used traditional terms to explain the given foreign conditions in order to establish the similarities with his own notions (like paternal sovereignty). With the usage of familiar terms he made the appreciation of the suitability of his model easier and possibly increased the acceptance of his reform proposals. New terminologies which penetrated in the reform language as loan words and in this way might cause a change in language could not be ascertained; contrary to the assumption of Zedler about a change in language through contact with other cultures in this case. The model was new (China as non-European and non-Christian monarchy), but the usage of a model or a paragon by itself was not new for the strategy of argumentation of reform. Justi's language of model was held consciously traditional and familiar for his addressees. Reform required insight and acceptance to be achieved especially through the strategy of a familiar language of reform.

In the volume of *Cambridge Companion of French Enlightenment*, published in 2014, the British historian Daniel Brewer argued that the French Enlightenment philosophers oriented themselves towards a rationally conceivable and ideal future and took it into consideration when discussing their own present.<sup>61</sup> A reform of existing conditions, which should strive for an ideal future, is, true to this view, the integral intention of political, cultural, social, and economic writings and conducts of Enlightenment philosophers and the fundamental idea of *philosophé*. Language is, according to Brewer, also in close proportion to the ideal and requires a discussion about the question of the essence of the future and how to shape it. The aspect of the past and the tradition as a foundation for the perception of the future dominates in the model constructions and influenced the verbal performance of Justi.

## Notes

1. J.G. Leopoldt, *Nützliche und auf die Erfahrung gegründete Einleitung zu der Landwirthschaft* (Sorau: s.n., 1750), 24.
2. Compare for Justi: S. Erik, “Johann Heinrich Gottlob von Justi (1717–1771): The Life and Times of an Economist Adventurer”, in *The Beginnings of Political Economy: Johann Heinrich Gottlob von Justi: The European Heritage in Economics and the Social Sciences*, ed. J.G. Backhaus (Berlin: Springer, 2009), 33–74; I.K. Ahl, “Johann Heinrich Gottlob”, in *Juristen: Ein biographisches Lexikon von der Antike bis zum 20. Jahrhundert*, ed. M. Stolleis (Munich: Beck, 1995), 340–342; E. Lluch, “Der Kameralismus, ein vieldimensionales Lehrgebäude: Seine Rezeption bei Adam Smith und im Spanien des 18. Jahrhunderts”, *Jahrbuch für Wirtschaftsgeschichte* 2 (2000): 133–154; J. Remer, *Johann Heinrich Gottlob Justi: Ein deutscher Volkswirt des 18. Jahrhunderts* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1938), 5–22.
3. According to Justi the most important position in the manufactory of the states was occupied by the monarch. Justi attributed both leadership and initiative for the necessary reforms to the ruler, who had to set an example for the estates. The goal was to transform the ignorance towards matters of agriculture into support and to embed the importance of agriculture in the consciousness of all estates and among the tasks of the state.
4. J.H.G. von Justi, *Staatswirtschaft oder systematische Abhandlung aller ökonomischen und Kameralwissenschaften, die zur Regierung eines Landes erfordert werden* (Leipzig: Breitkopf, 1758), 1: VI.
5. A term that is very rare in German contemporary sources but still present in research. Schilling talks about a key term of the era. L. Schilling, “Reform”, in *Enzyklopädie der Neuzeit*, ed. F. Jäger (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2009), 10: col. 777; B. Stollberg-Rilinger, *Europa im Jahrhundert der Aufklärung* (Stuttgart: Reclam, 2000), 194–230; W. Demel, *Vom aufgeklärten Reformstaat zum bürokratischen Staatsabsolutismus* (Munich: Oldenbourg, 1993), 8–31; H. Duchhardt, *Barock und Aufklärung* (Munich: Oldenbourg, 2007), 136–148.
6. S. Richter, “Bürgerliche Freiheit für ökonomische Handlungsfähigkeit”, in *Was ist Freiheit? Eine historische Perspektive*, ed. S. Richter, A. Siebold, and U. Weeber (Frankfurt: Campus Verlag, 2016), 47–65.

7. The original Greek term *stratēgia* was understood as a skill on the field of battle and was used in Europe exclusively in the military meaning until the 1750s. From the 18th century onwards, it started seeing use in both politics and economics and their communication processes. Strategy as a political term implied military components such as the analysis of situations, the dynamics of changes, and reactions to them, which were supposed to allow making calculated changes to the civilian realm. As a civilian political term, it was still very much associated with the military because it too was concerned with marshalling physical, moral, symbolical, and professional resources to achieve specific goals. In administration, the idea of acting strategically increasingly developed and resulted in concrete analytical and practical concepts. A strategy required to look at an issue from different perspectives and opened up the multi-layered complexity of its multiple solutions to the civilian observer, something that military men were long since familiar with. See for this M. Wagener, "Über das Wesen der Strategie", ÖMZ-Online 4 (2010): 3–13; H. Münkler, "Zum Verhältnis von politischer und militärischer Strategie", in *Strategie in der Politikwissenschaft: Konturen eines neuen Forschungsfelds*, ed. J. Raschke (Wiesbaden: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften, 2010), 45–73; Introduction to H. Münkler, *Gewalt und Ordnung: Das Bild des Krieges im politischen Denken* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer Taschenbuch Verlag, 1992).
8. K. Heinze, *Zwischen Wissenschaft und Profession: das Wissen über den Begriff Verbesserung im Diskurs der pädagogischen Fachlexikographie vom Ende des 18. bis zur Mitte des 19. Jahrhunderts* (Opladen: Budrich UniPress, 2008), 12.
9. J.H. Zedler, *Grosses vollständiges Universal-Lexicon* (1732–1754; repr., Graz: Akademische Druck- und Verlagsanstalt, 1982), 47: col. 86. *Correctio* became part of Roman legal language in 52 BCE as an attempt to regain control over the deteriorating *mores*. Pompey received a special consulate (*sine collega*) to improve public morality (*corrigendis moribus*). He saw this as a call to create legislation which was regarded as reform legislation, but was not realised. Only under Caesar and Augustus would parts of it be realised. H. Bellen, *Politik, Recht, Gesellschaft: Studien zur alten Geschichte* (Stuttgart: Steiner, 1997), 196. Joanna Innes pointed out, that Verbesserung was used as an administrative term. J. Innes, "Politics and Morals: The Reformation of Manners Movement in Later Eighteenth-Century England", in *The Transformation of Political Culture: England and Germany in the Late Eighteenth Century*, ed. E. Hellmuth (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), 57–118.
10. T. Pfister and N. Stehr, "Einführung: Fragile Welten aus Wissen", in *Fragile Stabilität-stabile Fragilität*, ed. S.A. Jansen, E. Schröter, and N. Stehr (Wiesbaden: Springer Fachmedien, 2013), 9–18.
11. J.H.G. von Justi, *Anweisung zu einer guten deutschen Schreibart und allen in den Geschäftten und Rechtssachen vorfallenden schriftlichen Ausarbeiten . . .* (Leipzig: Breitkopf, 1769), 34; *Verbesserung der Sprache* and *Vorrede*. In other contemporary handbooks on administrative language: K. Margreiter, "Die Diskussion über die deutsche Verwaltungssprache, ca. 1750–1840", in *Sprachvollzug im Amt: Kommunikation und Verwaltung im Europa des 19. und 20. Jahrhunderts*, ed. P. Becker (Bielefeld: Transcript, 2011), 75–105.
12. Justi, *Anweisung zu einer guten deutschen Schreibart*, 346.
13. Peter Becker speaks of a political and ideological integration of subjects into the state using a clear, nearly common language with a political semantic.

- Becker, *Sprachvollzug im Amt*, 230; Margreiter, “Die Diskussion über die deutsche Verwaltungssprache”, 100.
14. A. Görgen, “Aufklärerische Tendenzen in der Gesetzessprache der Frühen Neuzeit”, in *Recht und Sprache in der deutschen Aufklärung*, ed. U. Kronauer (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2002), 97. The contemporary discussion criticised the multitude of different regional and social dialects prevalent in the Empire. P. Becker, “wie wenig die Reform den alten Sauerteig ausgefegt hat”: Zur Reform der Verwaltungssprache im späten 18. Jahrhundert aus vergleichender Perspektive”, in *Jenseits der Diskurse: Aufklärungspraxis und Institutionenwelt in europäisch komparativer Perspektive*, ed. H.E. Bödeker and M. Gierl (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2007), 81, 95.
  15. J.H.G. von Justi, *Historische und juristische Schriften* (Frankfurt am Main: Garbe, 1760), 1:271.
  16. Aeneas was a role model in the tradition of kings which was intimately connected to the self-image of kings and heroes in Asia Minor but was also included in the later self-image of European rulers. Aeneas’ example of kingship was to be always the first in every work, just as he had not only pushed his followers to cut down trees but was the first to start the work. According to Virgil: *opera inter talia primus paribus accingitur armis*. Publius Vergilius Maro, *Aeneis: Buch VI*, ed. E. Norden (Leipzig: Teubner, 1916), 183; Commentary Publius Vergilius Maro, *Aeneis*, 189. The role of *primus* was also attributed to Alexander the Great by panegyrists. During his conquest of Persia he was supposedly the first to grab a pickaxe in order to clear the way for his tired soldiers while crossing snowy and frozen terrain. *Primus rex dolabra glaciem perfringens iter sibi fecit*. Q. Curtius Rufus, *Historiae Alexandri Magni Macedonis*, ed. C.M. Lucarini (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2009), 5:6, 13. On princes as *primus* in the early modern period, see T. Struve, “Die Bedeutung der aristotelischen *Politik* für die natürliche Begründung der staatlichen Gemeinschaft”, in *Das Publikum politischer Theorie im 14. Jahrhundert*, ed. J. Miethke (Munich: Oldenbourg, 1992), 154–171. On the history of the term *princeps*: L. de Libero, “Princeps”, in *Der neue Pauly*, ed. A. Pauly, H. Cancik, and M. Landfenster (Stuttgart: Metzler, 2001), 10: col. 328–331.
  17. W.A.S. Koch, C. Czogalla, and M. Ehret, eds., *Grundlagen der Wirtschaftspolitik*, 3rd ed. (Stuttgart: Lucius & Lucius, 2008), 24.
  18. J.F. de Bielfeld and N.B. Duchense, *Institutions Politiques, ouvrage où l'on traite de des Forces d'un Etat; Et en général de tout ce qu'a rapport au Gouvernement*, 4 vols (Paris: s.n., 1762). Wolff had postulated that common welfare and security were the goal of society, while society was at the same time the tool through which one wanted to secure these goals. The prince was supposed to guide this. While Wolff did not directly name him as actor and carrier of change, this follows from his arguments. C. von Wolff, *Vernünftige Gedanken von dem gesellschaftlichen Leben der Menschen und Insonderheit dem gemeinen Wesen...* (Frankfurt am Main: Renger, 1721), 166, § 223. H. Wessel, “Zweckmäßigkeit als Handlungsprinzip in der deutschen Regierungs- und Verwaltungslehre der frühen Neuzeit” (PhD diss., Berlin University, 1978), 77.
  19. C. Priegnitz, introduction to *Vaterlandsliebe und Freiheit: Deutscher Patriotismus von 1750 bis 1850* (Wiesbaden: Steiner, 1981). Stolleis concludes that the developing patriotism towards the Empire was an indicator for crises of the Empire. These crises had a stimulating effect on the identification with the Empire. M. Stolleis, “Reichspublizistik und Reichspatriotismus vom 16.–18. Jahrhundert”, in *Patriotismus*, ed. G. Birtsch (Hamburg: Meiner, 1991), 8. More on patriotism towards the empire: N. Vazsinyi, “Montesquieu,

- Friedrich Carl von Moser, and the ‘National Spirit Debate’ in Germany”, *German Studies Review* 22, no. 2 (May 1999): 234; R. Vierhaus, “‘Patriotismus’ – Begriff und Realität einer moralisch-politischen Haltung”, in *Deutschland im 18. Jahrhundert: Politische Verfassung, soziales Gefüge, geistige Bewegungen: Ausgewählte Aufsätze*, ed. R. Vierhaus (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1987), 96–109; H.E. Bödeker, “Prozesse und Strukturen politischer Bewußtseinsbildung der deutschen Aufklärung”, in *Aufklärung als Politisierung – Politisierung der Aufklärung*, ed. H.E. Bödeker and U. Herrmann (Hamburg: Meiner, 1987), 10–31.
20. See H. Hattenhauer, *Geschichte des deutschen Beamtentums*, 2nd ed. (Cologne: Heymann, 1993), 167.
  21. While writing his *Vergleichungen*, Justi was currently waiting to be assigned an office and hoping to be accepted into the Prussian administration. Ahl, “Johann Heinrich Gottlob”, 341.
  22. J.H.G. von Justi, *Vergleichungen der Europäischen mi der Asiatischen und andern vermeintlich barbarischen Regierungen, in drey Büchern* (Berlin, 1762), 33.
  23. Ibid., 20. In Du Halde’s “Ausführliche[r] Beschreibung des Chinesischen Reichs, Vol. 2” there is a collection of edicts that the Chinese Emperors supposedly handed out centuries ago. Among them is the revocation of a law prohibiting criticism of the emperors: “Kaiser Vent ti schaffte das Gesetz ab, nachdem Kaiser nicht kritisiert werden dürfen”, J.-B. du Halde, *Ausführliche Beschreibung des Chinesischen Reichs und der grossen Tarterey* (Rostock, 1747–1756), 2:448.
  24. K. Tribe, *Governing Economy: The Reformation of German Economic Discourse 1750–1840* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 59.
  25. R.T. Goebel, “China as an Embalmed Mummy: Herder’s Orientalist Poetics”, *South Atlantic Review* 60, no. 1 (1995): 126.
  26. Justi, *Vergleichungen*, 57.
  27. G. Frühsorge, *Privatklugheit: Zur Bedeutungsgeschichte des Politischen in der Hofliteratur des 17. Jahrhunderts in Deutschland und in den politischen Romanen Christian Weises* (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1974), 6, 68.
  28. Justi, *Vergleichungen*; Vorrede, 4.
  29. European rulership and the reciprocal legal recognition within Europe were based on the similar political structure of many European states, especially of the monarchies, as well as the converging interests of their rulers and the dynastic connections spanning the continent. Europe was thus a community of laws due to related dynasties and shared a political culture with their roots in the dynastic connection of the ruling families. This meant that in the Early Modern period in most of Europe, monarchs were guiding the polity and the subjects of international law. These premises were thus the basis of understanding foreign cultures and countries in international law originating in their system of governance and their rulers. Johan Christian Lünig (1662–1740) remarked in his 1720 published *Theatrum ceremoniale* that there were monarchs in Asia that were equals to European ones: “[es gäbe] auch unterschiedene mächtige Könige und Potentaten in Asia”. Among them were Persia, the Mughals, Japan, and China: “in Asien der König in Persien, der grosse Mogol, der Kayser in Japan, der Cham der Tarterey und zugleich Kayser in China”. In negotiations they received honours reserved for kings: “denen Europäischen Potentaten, so mit denselben zu negoziiren haben, Königen gehörige Ehren-Bezeugungen erwiesen.” These honours, such as specific addresses and titles, were part of ceremonial culture among sovereign actors: “eine unter souveränen, oder ihnen gleichgeltenden

- Personen . . . eingeführte Ordnung". J.C. Lünig, "Vom Ceremoniel, so bey unterschiedenen ausser Europa befindlichen Höfen bey ein und ander Fällen observiret worden", in *Theatrum Ceremoniale Historico Politicum*, ed. J.C. Lünig (Leipzig: Moritz Weidmann, 1720), 2:1461. See also S. Richter, "Die Bewertung des chinesischen Kaisers in europäischen Druckwerken des 17. und 18. Jahrhunderts als Spiegel seiner völkerrechtlichen Gleichrangigkeit", *Jahrbuch der Staatlichen Kunstsammlungen Dresden* 34 (2008): 27–39; S. Richter, "Der Einfluss des Privatfürstenrechts auf das Völkerrecht als europäisches Phänomen", *Zeitschrift der Savigny-Stiftung für Rechtsgeschichte: Germanistische Abteilung* 127 (2010): 293–300; W. Demel, "Kaiser außerhalb Europas? Beobachtungen zur Titulatur außereuropäischer Herrscher zwischen 'deskriptiver'" Reiseliteratur und politischen Interessen", in *Überseegeschichte: Beiträge der jüngeren Forschung: Festschrift anlässlich der Gründung der Forschungsstiftung für vergleichende europäische Überseegeschichte 1999 in Bamberg*, ed. T. Beck, et al. (Stuttgart: Steiner, 1999), 63.*
30. C. von Wolff, *Oratio de Sinarum philosophia practica: Rede über die praktische Philosophie der Chinesen*, ed. M. Albrecht (Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 1985), 57. Wolff assumed that Confucius did not establish his own teachings but rather adopted, structured, and bundled those of the old Emperors Yao, Shun, and Yu. J. Ho, "Quellenuntersuchung zur Chinakenntnis bei Leibniz und Wolff" (PhD diss., Zürich University, 1962), 94, 105.
  31. Zedler, *Grosses vollständiges Universal-Lexikon*, 21: col. 378.
  32. C. von Wolff, ed., *Vollständiges Mathematisches Lexicon: Darinnen alle Kunst-Wörter und Sachen, welche in der erwegenden und ausübenden Matheri vorzukommen pflegen, deutlich erklärert* (Leipzig: Gleditsch, 1734), col. 852.
  33. P. Dreher, "Die kognitive Metapher als Werkzeug des Denkens: Zur Rolle der Analogie bei der Gewinnung und Vermittlung wissenschaftlicher Erkenntnisse" (PhD diss., Tübingen University, 2003), 19. On how Wolff understood metaphors and his argument to avoid the double meaning of metaphors, compare V. Albus, "Weltbild und Metapher: Untersuchungen zur Philosophie im 18. Jahrhundert" (PhD diss., Würzburg University, 2001), 28.
  34. C. von Wolff, "Vernünfftige Gedanken von Gott, der Welt und der Seele des Menschen, auch allen Dingen überhaupt", in *Christian von Wolff: Gesammelte Werke*, ed. J. Ecole, et al. (1751; repr., Hildesheim: Olms, 1983), 2:223; also compare G. Gabriel, "Witz", in *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie*, ed. J. Ritter (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2004), 12: col. 983–990; G. Gabriel, "Der 'Witz' der reflektierenden Urteilskraft und Heuristik in den Wissenschaften", in *Urteilskraft und Heuristik in den Wissenschaften: Beiträge zur Entstehung des Neuen*, ed. F. Rodi (Weilerswist: Velbrück Wissenschaft, 2003), 197–211. According to Wolff, Witz stood diametrically opposed to *acumen*, brilliance or deep insight. Brilliance was rather used to distinguish things from one another. Similarities could be perceived when brilliance stopped working and were first noticed by the eye. Albus, *Weltbild und Metapher*, 35.
  35. C.A. van Peursen, *Ars inveniendi im Rahmen der Metaphysik Christian Wolffs* (Hamburg: Meiner, 1983), 76.
  36. D. Hume, *Philosophical Essays Concerning Human Understanding: By the Author of the Essays Moral and Political* (London: Miller, 1748), 24.
  37. Ibid., 32.
  38. According to Max Black's modern theory of interaction, Wolff had to connect two realms of objects. The first realm of objects was the European

concept of *patria potestas*, the second that of *hsiao*/filial piety. He did so by projecting certain associations from the primary to the secondary realm of objects. One such association would for example be that paternal love and might are motivations for rule. Wolff's misunderstanding therefore created a new, specifically Eurocentric view on paternal rule in China. He created a stereotype. M. Black, "Mehr über die Metapher", in *Theorie der Metapher*, ed. A. Haverkamp (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1996), 393–404.

39. Justi, *Vergleichungen*, 29.
40. Justi, *Staatswirtschaft*, 2:162.
41. Montesquieu not only remarked that the fertility of China's farmland was insufficient to feed its population, but he also painted a grim picture of the results of famines such as child abandonment and deaths through starvation, both a direct result of maladministration by the state. C.L. de Secondat de Montesquieu, *Esprit des lois*, ed. J. Brethe de la Gressaye, Vol. 1 (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1950), bk. VII, ch. 6, 187 and bk. VIII, ch. 21, 227.
42. Justi, *Vergleichungen*, 294.
43. Justi copied the description of the ploughing ceremony word for word from the letter by Père Contancin to Étienne Souciet. This is why Emperor Yongzheng is erroneously named as the current emperor despite his death in 1735. "Lettre du Père Contancin au Père Étienne Souciet, Canton, 15 December 1727," in C. Gobien, et al., eds., *Lettres édifiantes et curieuses, écrites des missions étrangères...* (Pari: Leclerc, 1702–1776), 19:265–403.
44. Justi, *Vergleichungen*, 300.
45. On Justi's ideas: Justi, *Staatswirtschaft*, 1:30.
46. Zedler, *Grosses vollständiges Universal-Lexicon*, 7: col. 289.
47. C. von Wolff, *Philosophia Moralis Sive Ethica: Methodo Scientifica Pertractata* (Halae Magdeburgicae: Renger, 1752), 1:601, § 402. Wolff additionally writes that a demonstration should be proof that clears up any doubt (*eine Demonstration ein Beweß seyn soll, dabey kein Zweifel übrig bleibt*). C. von Wolff, "Vernünftige Gedanken von den Kräften des menschlichen Verstandes und ihrem richtigen Gebrauche in Erkenntnis der Wahrheit", in *Christian von Wolff: Gesammelte Werke*, ed. J. Ecole, et al. (1736; repr., Hildesheim: Olms, 2006), 1:172, § 21. See for example to Wolff's use of demonstrations in law: J. Schröder, *Wissenschaftstheorie und Lehre der 'praktischen' Jurisprudenz auf deutschen Universitäten an der Wende zum 19. Jahrhundert* (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 1979), 134.
48. Justi, *Vergleichungen*, 305.
49. Ibid., 297; see also Étienne De Silhouettes introduction to his chapter on agriculture: E. de Silhouettes, "L'Agriculture est un des principaux objets de l'attention du Gouvernement Chinois", in *Idée générale du gouvernement et de la morale des Chinois*, ed. E. de Silhouettes (Paris: Quillau, 1729), 21.
50. Justi, *Vergleichungen*, 307, 308.
51. J.H.G. von Justi, *Die Natur und Wesen der Staaten* (Berlin, 1760), 582.
52. "Così interviene nelle cose di stato; perché, conoscendo discosto (il che non è dato se non a uno prudente) e' male che nascono in quello, si guariscono presto; ma quando, per non li avere conosciuti, si lasciono crescere in modo che ognuno li conosce, non vi è più remedio". N. Machiavelli, *Il Principe: Italienisch/Deutsch*, ed. P. Rippel (Stuttgart: Reclam, 2007), 20.
53. J. Guilhaumou, *Sprache und Politik in der Französischen Revolution: Vom Ereignis zur Sprache des Volkes (1789–1794)* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1989), 88, 90. See also F. Furet, ed., *Kritisches Wörterbuch der Französischen Revolution* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1996), 2:1318–1329.

54. A. Bührer and D. Schiersner, “Reformen – Verlierer. Forschungsfragen zu einem besonderen Verhältnis”, in *Reformverlierer 1000–1800: Zum Umgang mit Niederlagen in der europäischen Vormoderne*, ed. A. Bührer and D. Schiersner (Berlin: Dunker und Humboldt, 2017), 16.
55. Justi, *Staatswirtschaft*, 1:50; T. Meyer, *Natur, Technik und Wirtschaftswachstum im 18. Jahrhundert: Risikorezeption und Sicherheitsversprechen* (Münster: Waxmann, 1999), 48.
56. J.H.G. von Justi, *Die Grundfeste zu der Macht und Glückseligkeit der Staaten, oder Ausführliche Vorstellung der gesamten Policey-Wissenschaft* (1760-1761; repr., Aalen: Scientia Verlag, 1965), 1:555; J.H.G. von Justi, *Grundsätze der Polizeywissenschaft: in einem vernünftigen . . . Zusammenhang und zum gebrauch academischer Vorlesung abgefasst*, 2nd ed. (Göttingen: Verlag der Wittwe Vandenhoeck, 1759), 91.
57. Justi, *Vergleichungen*, 353.
58. Ibid., 57.
59. Ibid., *Vorrede*, 6.
60. Zedler, *Grosses vollständiges Universal-Lexikon*, 39: col. 245. Veränderung wiederum erklärte Zedler mit dem lateinischen transmutatio, der Verwandlung.
61. D. Brewer, “The Enlightenment Today?,” in *The Cambridge Companion to the French Enlightenment*, ed. D. Brewer, Cambridge Companions to Literature (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 1–13.

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# 7 Luxury as an Eighteenth-Century Language of Reform of Society Between France and Italy

Jean-François Melon, Antonio Genovesi, and Georges-Marie Butel-Dumont

*Cecilia Carnino*

## I

This contribution focuses on the deliberation on luxury as a political language aimed at the reform of the *ancien régime* society, placing it within the context of the more general political significance of eighteenth-century European economic discourse. In eighteenth-century Europe economic discourse represented one of the main languages with which to discuss the reform and to offer a critique of society.<sup>1</sup> In the century that *invented* political economy a new social hierarchy gradually began to impose itself, one based on economic disparities that eventually replaced rank affiliations, corporate privileges, and religious solidarities as a means of defining society.<sup>2</sup> Thus, as the contents and language of the new economic culture were progressively defined, economic discourse imposed itself as an instrument for developing a more modern society.

In this way reflections on luxury, a notion that starting from the eighteenth century became imbued with new significance and centrality, imposed themselves at the heart of economic discussions after having long been mostly relegated to the moral sphere.<sup>3</sup> As the century progressed, there in fact developed several different languages constructed around the notion of luxury. While many of these were intended to support specific approaches to political economy and were therefore directly inspired by political considerations and reflected established social views, others were influenced by a more complex economic and political nexus. Eighteenth-century authors developed manifold economic considerations on luxury, ranging from critiques that saw it as a drain on the resources of the countryside to those that understood it as a promoter of commercial and agricultural development. Some of these also touched on crucial political and social questions in the context of well-defined political strategies and promoted and legitimised new social and cultural models. From this perspective *luxury* became a veritable keyword of reforms in the course of the eighteenth century.

At the same time evoking the concept of luxury represented a definite and conscious communication strategy. On one hand, during the eighteenth century luxury became a prominent theme of the public debate, being able to arouse the interest of a growing audience of readers and of an increasing public opinion. Writing and publishing works on this topic was a means to legitimise the role of the authors, establishing their authority and attracting attention to their writings. On the other hand, the eighteenth-century reformers made a conscious choice on both a rhetoric and linguistic level to attribute a completely new meaning to a traditional concept such as luxury. Through this they proposed economic reforms and tried to legitimise a different social model founded on public utility and personal interest.

In the context of the volume and complexity of European reflections on luxury and its political consequences, something that historians have only recently begun to reveal, the attention will be concentrated on Italy and France. Here the ideas of three authors – Jean-François Melon, Antonio Genovesi, and Georges-Marie Butel-Dumont – will particularly be explored. The decision to focus on Italy and France, two countries marked by a strong circulation of ideas, is because French and Italian authors in the second half of the eighteenth century distinguished themselves by adopting a markedly political perspective on luxury, which was partly designed to undermine structural elements of the *ancien régime*.<sup>4</sup> Similarly, this aspect also reveals a difference compared to the English context, as England was a more fluid society already committed to a comprehensive programme of political and economic reforms, where discussions on the subject of luxury did not assume the same wide-ranging and sometimes even radical political value that they had in Italy and France, but were instead used to legitimise the commercial society and the emerging middle class.<sup>5</sup>

The choice of Melon, Genovesi, and Butel-Dumont is the outcome of several considerations. Firstly, all three authors were key contributors to the eighteenth-century discussion of luxury, and each played a leading role in directing the debate in their home countries, contributing decisively to the development of a new language that promoted luxury as an instrument of social reform. At the same time, their ideas had a crucial element in common in the attention that they paid to the specific question of the relative nature of the concept of luxury. This idea is of central importance as it allows us to observe the circulation of ideas between France and Italy by following a specific theme and brings to light certain characteristics and peculiarities of the two countries. Perhaps most importantly the focus on the relativity of the concept of luxury – which came to be a real rhetoric device employed by the three authors to convince firstly the political power, and then a more general audience, of the necessity to bring about the proposed changes – also reveals how economic reflection on luxury gradually attained a wider role in social

reform. It is precisely in this respect that the ideas of the three authors, who wrote on the subject at different moments between the 1730s and the 1770s, make it possible to follow and highlight a fundamental change in ways of discussing reform and luxury. Starting in particular from the 1750s, a significant shift began in the language of luxury as it moved from being solely a language concerning economic reform to a language of the reform and (later) the critique of the social structure of the *ancien régime*. While the former approach espoused the need for a transformation of the economic structure and implied a linear progress based on the explicit rejection of past models (first of all the ancient republican models), the latter supported a more general move from a view of social reform as an outcome of economic progress to one that saw the need for a profound upheaval, even a revolution, in *ancien régime* society.

## II

Before focusing specifically on the ideas of Melon, Genovesi, and Butel-Dumont it seems important to offer a brief account of the eighteenth-century debate on luxury and to emphasise the rupture that took place above all at the start of the 1730s.

These years were, in fact, witness to a profound change in representations and judgements of luxury that was in part a reflection of eighteenth-century Europe's material transformation and partly the result of profound shifts in economic thought and the establishment of new economic and social models.<sup>6</sup> After having long been the target of a critique guided principally by Christian morality, growing concern for the social order, and worries about the balance of trade, luxury gradually began to be interpreted, albeit not exclusively, as a stimulus for economic growth and a symbol of material progress. Starting above all with the revaluation of the passions pioneered by the Scottish Enlightenment, the idea of luxury in fact went from being a negative concept built on a moral and religious condemnation of those who used goods deemed inappropriate to their social status, to becoming a positive notion linked to the development of society and national prosperity. This occurred as the conviction began to assert itself that the prosperity of society and the power of the state could no longer be judged solely based on moral parameters but in fact benefitted from increasing the private wellbeing of individuals.<sup>7</sup>

This new assessment of the *value* of luxury also led to an important change in the way of conceptualising the *notion* of luxury, which moved from being defined as an excess in relation to consumption levels limited by the social hierarchy to being described as a surplus evaluated from a historical point of view. This conceptual rupture allows us to follow the emergence of a new and more modern economic and social model that rejected the distinctions of rank, corporate privileges, and religious sectarianism underpinning the equilibrium of the *ancien régime*, placing

centre stage the role played by individual economic interests as the principal influence on public prosperity.

### III

One of the works that contributed most decisively to the development and dissemination of this new, positive representation of luxury was Francois Melon's *Essai politique sur le commerce*.<sup>8</sup> Published in 1734, the book was reprinted in eight different French editions in the following two years alone. In 1739 it was translated into English and 1778 saw the publication of the first Italian edition, translated by Abbot Francesco Longano, a pupil of Antonio Genovesi.<sup>9</sup>

In the *Essai* Melon set out an evaluation of luxury based mainly on economic considerations and aimed at discrediting the traditional critical characterisation of luxury as a phenomenon that corroded ethics and the nation in general, an attitude espoused perhaps most successfully by the French moralist François Fénelon.<sup>10</sup> Following in the footsteps of Bernard de Mandeville<sup>11</sup> Melon described luxury in relative terms, seeing it not as an excess but as something beyond what is strictly necessary for subsistence, and offering a modern definition of "an extraordinary sumptuousness proceeding from the riches and security of a government" that was "attendant upon every well-governed society."<sup>12</sup> This definition, the result and also the echo of the eighteenth-century shift in perception of the concept, clearly reveals a direct relationship between luxury and civilisation, between luxury and the progress of society, which the French author further developed in his analysis of the relativity of the concept of luxury.

Developing an idea already put forward in Mandeville's *Fable of the Bees*, Melon's *Essai* argues that luxury, or rather those things that people consider to be or define as luxuries, is strictly contingent on time, space, and rank affiliation, and is, therefore, relative. Luxury, it underlines, is in fact "always relative to time and to persons. What was luxury in the days of our fathers, is now very common; and what is luxury among us, will not be so, to our posterity."<sup>13</sup> On the one hand, goods considered to be luxuries in the past (and which continue to be perceived as such in primitive societies), are seen as necessities, or at least as conveniences, in modern and developed societies, having entered common usage. On the other hand, in the traditional perspective of society, in which explanations of luxury continue to depend on the subdivisions of the social order, luxury is a *relative* concept based on social affiliation:

the peasant findeth luxury in the habitation of the villager; the villager in the house of the inhabitant of his neighbour town; who on his part looketh upon himself, as unpolite, with respect to the

inhabitant of the capital city; and he is yet more unpolite, when compared to the courtier.<sup>14</sup>

This emphasis on the relative nature (in terms of time, space, and social order) of the notion of luxury appears to have been aimed at shielding luxury from traditional condemnations that insisted on representing it as consumption in excess of what had been established by nature and by social propriety. Starting from this liberation from moral condemnation, Melon constructed his discourse of an economic evaluation of luxury, which he linked directly to the development of society. He argued that while luxury could be ruinous for a small state, where the population would only be big enough to provide for basic needs, and for republics, which were characterised by egalitarian wealth distribution, it could instead enrich and strengthen large and populous states.<sup>15</sup> For Melon luxury was an outcome of good politics and thus of fundamental importance to the development of public prosperity and the power of the state.<sup>16</sup>

In particular, Melon considered luxury to be the most important incentive for industriousness and, through the mechanism of social emulation, a powerful driver of increased labour productivity. By creating a sort of virtuous circle, increased desires not only encourage rising productivity but also the incessant technological progress needed to satisfy the growing demand for luxury goods. At the same time Melon argued that increased spending on such goods constitutes one of the most powerful causes of wealth redistribution, and he thus shifted the focus onto the social implications of luxury. Even spending on overtly ostentatious goods that might at times be deemed *ridiculous* or *excessive* could not be seen as damaging for the very fact that it promoted the reallocation of money from the wealthiest individuals to ordinary workers:

why should this extravagant expense be exclaimed against? The money thus earned, would, if it lay in the chest of the luxurious man, remain dead to society. The gardener receiveth it, and hath deserved it, as a recompence for his labour, which is thus excited again. His children, almost naked, are thereby clothed; they eat bread in plenty; enjoy better health, and labour with a cheerful expectation.<sup>17</sup>

Luxury was therefore of benefit because it allowed money to circulate and because by enabling the development of skills it made it possible for those who possess nothing but their own labour to obtain work. This idea also provided the basis for Melon's criticisms of sumptuary laws, which he not only deemed damaging because they stood in the way of industriousness and innovations in productive techniques, but also accused, in the context of a reflection with echoes of natural law theory, of placing immoral limits on individual freedom.<sup>18</sup>

Through his positive evaluation of luxury Melon not only proposed a specific model of political economy founded on work and the development of trade and manufacturing activity, but also attempted to influence the economic policy of the French monarchy as part of an economic analysis that was entirely politically motivated. Melon started from the conviction that eighteenth-century France was in a position of economic backwardness that required the abandonment of Mandeville's liberalism and opposition to the agrarian model theorised so effectually by Fénelon.<sup>19</sup> Instead, he proposed a neo-Colbertist approach. In Melon's view agriculture formed the foundation of the French economy, but he linked the economic development of an agrarian country to the creation of new types of manufacturing industry and an increase of labour productivity. In order to support the political power of France in a context of powerful international competition it was necessary to have a strong body of economic policies aimed at encouraging the manufacturing system and at drawing wealth into the country through international trade.<sup>20</sup> Standing against those who argued that sumptuary laws and regulations were required in order to improve France's balance of trade, Melon argued in favour of free trade in grains and an inflationary monetary policy that would eliminate food shortages and reduce the French national debt.

Melon's reflection on the value of luxury thus became a powerful language of economic reform that first of all explained the need for a transformation – intended as a linear process and a rejection of past models – of the economic structure of the *ancien régime*, starting from an awareness of increased international economic competition. His work also reflected a new and well-defined social model based on a more fluid society that recognised individual desires and the role of work, and which was the result of detailed political considerations that ultimately also shaped the more strictly economic dimension of his analysis.

#### IV

Melon's *Essai politique* played a key role in the evolution of reflections on the economic value of luxury in Italy, which began to appear somewhat later than in France and England, in the 1750s. The Italian discussion developed in strict relation to the launch of political reforms advanced through a collaboration between absolute power and intellectuals and found its first complete manifestation in the Kingdom of Naples. The *Essai* in fact circulated widely in the intellectual circle of Bartolomeo Intieri – a Tuscan émigré and the founder of the first Italian chair in political economy – whose members were engaged in developing a new plan for the reform and expansion of the Kingdom founded on engagement with modern trade.<sup>21</sup> The *Essai* particularly profoundly influenced Antonio Genovesi who, together with Ferdinando Galiani, was one of

the first Italian authors to propose a comprehensive set of ideas on the value of luxury.

Genovesi's first declarations on the subject of luxury can be found in his *Elementi del commercio*, which gathers together the notes for a university course on political economy that he taught between 1757 and 1758, and in his annotations to the translation of John Cary's *Essay on the State of England (Storia del commercio della Gran Bretagna)*.<sup>22</sup> However, he developed his fullest discussion of the theme in the *Lezioni di commercio*, which he published between 1765 and 1767 following the grave economic crisis of 1759–64. The work was an attempt to trace the outlines of a programme of political economy for the government, which had begun to pursue an aggressively reformist strategy after Charles of Bourbon's ascent to the throne.<sup>23</sup>

Following Melon's example Genovesi presented luxury as a progressive and civilising influence and as a driving force in economic growth. In strictly economic terms he interpreted luxury as a vital stimulus for the development of trade, as an incentive (through the concept of emulation) for home-grown manufacturing and as a factor in the growth of productive labour.<sup>24</sup> Just as it had in the case of Melon, Genovesi's thinking on the value of luxury, which he adapted to the context and requirements of Naples, assumed great importance as a language of economic reform derived from specific political considerations. It was aimed directly at pressuring the government to advance a plan to relaunch Neapolitan trade by adopting more liberal policies – which he believed were of fundamental importance to the quantitative and qualitative improvement of agriculture – in the hope that this would establish a market freed of all constraints.<sup>25</sup>

By the middle of the eighteenth century the reflection on luxury had thus become a well-established language of economic reform designed to encourage the development of international trade and to reinforce the manufacturing sector, and was capable of infiltrating and circulating within different nations while also being adaptable to local needs and circumstances. Yet at the same time it also began to assume a different role, becoming a privileged language used to demand reform of the social structure of the *ancien régime*. From this perspective Genovesi's thinking on the relativity of the concepts of need and luxury is of fundamental importance.

Genovesi took directly from Melon's *Essai* the idea that the line between need and surplus, between the useful and the excessive, was relative to historical periods and to the habits and customs of different countries and populations, and he insisted on the artificiality of methods used to categorise goods in order to rescue luxury from moral condemnations and to present it as the natural result of social progress. He also echoed Melon's conviction that luxury was relative to social circumstance: "in order to understand clearly the nature of excess, and thus of luxury,"

it was necessary to consider carefully “the classes of the men who make up civil society, which vary either according to differences of trades and possession, or of wealth, or of nobility, or of all three at the same time.”<sup>26</sup>

At first glance this appraisal of social relativism appears rather traditional, since it insisted that different levels of consumption, and thus also of luxury consumption, were essentially based on rank affiliation and individual wealth. Indeed, Genovesi adopted this traditional perspective when he defined luxury as “the practice of standing out within one’s class, or of imitating the class above by adopting standards or ways of life not necessary in either the physical or moral class in which one finds oneself.”<sup>27</sup> However, he also offered an extremely detailed description of the various social categories and the particular consumption that distinguished them, thus developing a highly complex and much more comprehensive taxonomy than the one put forward by Melon in his *Essai*.

Genovesi outlined a classification that also took into consideration occupations, or work, and thus led to a distinction between individuals, or categories of individuals, who were industrious and therefore beneficial to the state and those who were not industrious and therefore damaging to the state. His understanding of classes of consumption was not based solely on social classes, as it was for Melon, but also included considerations relating to the productivity of the various ranks. In fact Genovesi did not so much propose a direct link between luxury and wealth as he contrasted non-productive and, therefore, damaging luxury and “classes of the state who do not work” with the consumption and luxury of the “working classes.”<sup>28</sup> Thus on the one hand he initiated a decoupling of consumption and social belonging and, on the other hand, proposed a new potent language of political critique. Genovesi in fact openly linked unproductive and therefore damaging luxury to the baronial nobility, which used its wealth to acquire imported luxury goods and thus had a negative influence on the balance of trade and disincentivised the expansion of national manufacturing.<sup>29</sup> In this way the question of luxury led directly to a more complex political language of attack against the feudal nobility used to challenge both the ideology of this social order and the juridical institutions that helped it to maintain power, in the framework of the radicalisation of the anti-feudal polemic that followed the terrible famine of 1763 and 1764.<sup>30</sup> By explicitly rejecting the ideology of the feudal nobility – which justified its preeminent role in society and the state precisely on the basis that its lack of involvement in productive activity supposedly made it able to place public wellbeing ahead of private interests – Genovesi thus also attacked the principle on which the *ancien régime*’s official model of social hierarchy was founded.

Genovesi’s reflexion on luxury amounted not only to a political language of attack against the traditional feudal aristocracy but was also a true language used in support of the reform of the social structure of the *ancien régime*, in the framework of the *civil* dimension that distinguished

eighteenth-century Italian economic thought.<sup>31</sup> He in fact perceived and represented luxury as something that indirectly supported social mobility and a progressive erosion of the unproductive social orders: “luxury is the driving principle of these classes, and circles endlessly around them like the wheel of fortune, sometimes placing them on top and at other times on the bottom.”<sup>32</sup> This was more than a straightforward reiteration of the idea previously put forward by Melon, and before him by Mandeville, that luxury was a key factor in the flow of wealth from the rich to the industrious artisans. For Genovesi, in fact, luxury was not simply something that improved the conditions of the working classes through increased distribution of wealth guaranteed by the spending of more well-to-do social groups. His attention was instead focused on the extent to which social mobility – a concept with much more significant political implications – could be activated by luxury. Drawing a distinction between individual losses and collective gains, Genovesi argued that the *ruin* of the ancient aristocratic families, whose wealth was founded on unproductive rents, favoured the rise of new social groups that were more economically active and therefore of greater use to the state. Luxury from this perspective was an essential mechanism of social mobility that could be particularly effective in a society as deeply polarised as that of Naples. It thus effectively became one of the watchwords of the reform of the social structure of the *ancien régime*.<sup>33</sup>

## V

Starting from the second half of the eighteenth century, luxury thus imposed itself as a key concept not only in economic but also in social reform, gradually taking on a significance that ate away at the very foundations of *ancien régime* society.

A particularly clear awareness of the political implications of the issue of luxury and its impact on economic and social reform can clearly be discerned in the ideas of Butel-Dumont, a member of the group of economists and administrators gathered around the French intendant of commerce, Vincent de Gournay. Using a targeted initiative to publish economic texts, both French and foreign, the group was attempting to understand France’s potential role in the new world economy and to exert an influence on political choices.<sup>34</sup> The theme of luxury unmistakably came to play a crucial role in its thinking. Gournay’s followers eagerly took up the ideas of Melon but presented somewhat more mature positions, arguing that France had to compete with England on the international market by producing medium-quality manufactured goods on a large scale. In this context they focused their attention on the prominent role of demand for luxury in launching the production of goods of diverse levels of quality aimed at different classes of consumers and budgets. The authors of the new science of commerce, from Véron de Forbonnais to

Plumard de Danguel and George-Marie Butel-Dumont, no longer associated luxury goods with the idea of a passive balance of trade, since they credited trade, domestic consumption, and international consumption with the ability to put demand in contact with supply and, thus, to stimulate the growth of production.<sup>35</sup> This was an important advance in economic thought, one capable of bringing about a fuller understanding of the role of consumers in the process of production and of leading to a positive appraisal of increased domestic consumption.

With the publication of a treatise entitled *Théorie du luxe* in 1771, Butel-Dumont offered the most thorough and mature elaboration of the thinking on the value of luxury expounded – with different emphasis and distinction – by the authors of the new science of commerce.

Like Melon, Dumont argued for the need of considerations on the issue of luxury to focus on the great monarchies, thus liberating himself from the longing for a return to the virtue of the ancients. He stood against this by emphasising the value of productive luxury, or luxury based on labour, in the context of a more general call for support for the development of commerce.

Beginning by rejecting the naturalist theory of needs, the *Théorie du luxe* argues that the role of a great state is to avoid standing in the way of free enterprise and the individuals' enjoyment of the fruits of their labour, which is at the heart of economic progress. On the one hand the peoples' desire to improve their condition and thus also to enjoy luxury goods encourages them to work so as to be able to enjoy the pleasures that form the basis of human happiness. On the other hand in the context of an analysis closely attentive to technological innovation, the deployment of labour into luxury sectors facilitates the acquisition of skills that could also be of use in the production of more necessary goods. Seen from this perspective a broadened and more developed domestic market, as well as trade between *civilised nations*, encourages the discovery and development of the full extent of human potential and ability.<sup>36</sup>

All in all this positive valuation of luxury, which also presented itself as a critique of the physiocratic condemnation of *decorative luxury* as a drain on agricultural resources, helped producing a fuller understanding of the benefits of trade and to defend the wealth produced by it and by the growth of manufacturing in France.<sup>37</sup> Dumont used the issue of luxury to construct and present a language of economic reform out of a clear desire to influence the economic policy of the French monarchy in accordance with a precise political strategy. His objective, in line with plans shared by all the authors of the new science of commerce, was to conduct a critique of the interests of the financial classes and of the French taxation and public finance system that had created sudden fortunes and, thus, to pursue an attack on financial wealth as opposed to wealth derived from commerce.<sup>38</sup> This was the origin of the close attention paid to productive luxury, or rather to luxury originating from productive activities, which

was held in contrast to the ostentation of the tremendous fortunes that did not flow around the country and which damaged agriculture, commerce, and manufacturing activities by keeping interest rates high.<sup>39</sup>

Nevertheless, Dumont's thinking on luxury reveals traces of the emergence of a more radical language of reform of the social structure of the *ancien régime*. This again proceeded from considerations on the relativity (historical, geographical, and social) of the concept of luxury. Taking up the considerations developed before him by Melon and Genovesi, Butel-Dumont presented luxury as a direct consequence of civil progress and of the perfectibility of people and insisted, with a more mature conceptualisation than that of his two predecessors, on the artificial nature of the methods used to categorise goods:

the classification of luxury, the one that we hear offered every day, is not dependant on the natural needs of man, nor on the origins of things, nor on the wealth of people, nor even on the legal borders of the relations between them, but only on common usage, at the moment that we speak, of the different classes of society.<sup>40</sup>

Butel-Dumont's ideas led directly to the definition of luxury as "everything that is not a necessity" or as a "superfluous enjoyment."<sup>41</sup> Here we see an important change in respect to the definition offered by Melon and Genovesi: Luxury was in fact now detached from any reference to social orders and ranks. This idea was developed in Dumont's reflections on the social relativity of luxury, which he considered in depth after offering a number of examples to demonstrate the historical and geographical relativity of luxury and which were aimed at reinforcing the idea of a definition of the notion based not on real but on formal categories.<sup>42</sup>

In order to show that luxury was related to social ranks, Dumont evoked three distinct examples of consumers: a provincial French farmer, a Dutch farmer, and a *very rich* man from any modern country. Even the most cursory look at the lifestyle and consumption habits of these three categories nevertheless demonstrates how in reality, beyond the level of pure necessity, the level of their consumption was very similar and any clear distinction between the social classes was therefore subtle.<sup>43</sup> Furthermore, even individuals belonging to the same rank could have very different consumption habits depending on their habits and circumstances.<sup>44</sup> And, finally, for Dumont even

the order of the ranks varies according to a thousand circumstances. The policy of the Prince, his fancies, and those of the public, rises and falls at every turn, as do those of the individual or of a class of citizen.<sup>45</sup>

Accordingly, despite having started from an apparently traditional idea of luxury as something related to rank, Dumont arrived at a description of

the classes of consumption that in fact appears to be completely detached from social order. Moreover, he underlined that only *common opinion* defined what was necessary and what was luxury to different social groups, and that this common opinion varied *infinitely* and was completely arbitrary.<sup>46</sup> It follows that defining the concepts of necessity and luxury based on rank involves constructing a system of classification on uncertain and relative foundations. It is, therefore, better to define consumption from an anthropological and biological perspective, in other words in relation to the natural desires of humankind.

In this way Dumont liberated consumption from social belonging, recognising its arbitrary and uncertain value. At the same time he advanced a damaging critique of the social hierarchy of the *ancien régime* that implied a negative judgement of social legitimacy based on appearance and ostentation and in so doing undermined the foundation of the established social order.<sup>47</sup> With the *Théorie du luxe* the language of reform constructed around the word luxury thus ended up assuming a potentially revolutionary value. Luxury was transformed, we might say, from a word connected to reform, first economic and then social, into a revolutionary word no longer centred on gradual reform, but on a more radical transformation.

## Notes

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26. Genovesi, *Delle lezioni di Commercio*, 136.
27. Ibid., 137.
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## 8 A Useful Public Institution?

### Languages of University Reform in the German Territories, 1750–1800

*Johan Lange*

#### Introduction

Since the establishment of the first universities in the 11th century most likely anyone defending their existence and privileges argued that institutions of higher learning served the common good. However, the definition of what a university was and what its purpose should be has often changed, as has the vocabulary to describe and the arguments to legitimise them. This chapter studies the period between 1750 and 1800 when universities in the German territories were no longer conceived of as historically grown corporations, but instead depicted more and more often as public institutions. Yet it was not independence from government intervention and a focus on original research that dominated this language of university reform in the Age of Enlightenment, quite the contrary. The call for an efficient instruction of future jurists, pastors, physicians, and teachers prevailed. The quest for efficiency did not only concern the time/quality ratio of the individual intellectual training, but also took into account the cost/benefit ratio for society as a whole. Some authors even went so far as to demand the abolition of the existing universities. The creation of new specialised colleges for each discipline appeared to be easier than to deal with the age-old *Hohe Schulen* which were assessed as not modifiable. To gain the upper hand in this process some pro-reform authors developed a new language, i.e. a new vocabulary to describe the universities along with a corresponding set of new arguments.

William Clark has studied how academic practices in England and Germany changed towards the end of the 18th century, for example by introducing the *Abitur* or an equivalent proof of intellectual maturity as a necessary pass-gate to university.<sup>1</sup> Yet the reform discourse which accompanied – if not triggered – such changes has been almost completely overlooked by historiography.<sup>2</sup> The ideology of *Wissenschaft* in German idealistic thought after 1800 with its immense halo has blinded historians who too often identified themselves with such powerful, but rather unworldly, ideals like *Freiheit* (freedom) and *Einsamkeit* (solitude) of the scientist.<sup>3</sup> Yet a reluctance to study conceptions that are contrary to our

wishes as academics may lead to ignorance. When it comes to explaining how universities have successfully adapted to historical change for almost a millennium, one cannot keep to ideals. To study the reform debate on the universities in the German territories in the second half of the 18th century therefore promises new insights into the discourse on education and its change from the society of orders to the society of citizens. Furthermore, it is an informative example of how a language of reform evolved in the Age of Enlightenment.

I will argue that three different modes of argumentation were used by authors when writing about university reform. The traditional presentation of a university deplored single cases of abuse and shortcomings but called only for selective interventions by external agents. These texts respected the traditional self-description by universities as body politics and made use of a political vocabulary. From the 1760s onward a general critique of the lack of effectiveness of the *Hohe Schulen* used economic metaphors, for example by stating that a university should be managed like a factory. This called for a government intervention in order to make the universities more useful to the territory. This language of reform developed further and became increasingly abstract. Some authors now saw the possibility of a perfect higher education. Their quest for optimisation replaced the older intention of mending flaws. Some of them were even willing to sacrifice the existing universities in order to achieve their reformist goals.

## The University as a Republic

In the 18th century, German universities saw the peculiar phenomenon of printed guidebooks for prospective students explaining how one could succeed in his studies.<sup>4</sup> Many authors of these guidebooks began their argument by giving a definition of what a university was. Martin Schmeitzel (1679–1747) for example published his *Rechtschaffener Academicus*, the virtuous student, in 1738 at the prosperous Prussian University of Halle.<sup>5</sup> When explaining the status and social mechanisms of a university Schmeitzel used a political metaphor. He stated that every university was a *little republic*, the professors being the magistrate and the students the citizens of this polity. Magistrate and citizens were united by a tie, Schmeitzel claimed, through which “the head and the limbs are bound together so that the academic body shall and must be preserved”.<sup>6</sup>

In the thought of Martin Schmeitzel, the university was thus a body politic in its own right. He did not mean to *reform* this body politic – the word or its equivalents do not appear in the text. This would have been difficult because a body could be sick and in need of cure, but was not capable of a planned improvement, at least not in the discourse during Schmeitzel’s lifetime. His call for change was rather modest and therefore did not interfere with his use of the body politic metaphor. He argued,

for example, that students should be instructed to a greater extent to become useful members of society and that hence the number of theoretical classes should be reduced. He was aware that other authors might disagree, but excused his endeavour by stating:

The pretension to a liberty of thought was necessarily part of my intention, for a free and unbiased judgment cannot be found without it. . . . Wherever I might have judged wrongly, if I am being convinced of it, I will take it back. What else can be asked of me?<sup>7</sup>

This claim to a liberty of thought was typical for a reform discourse that developed from the 1760s onward. Martin Schmeitzel, who had been a professor himself, put forward rather cautious suggestions on changes in the curriculum. He retained the traditional self-description of universities as a Roman-style *res publica*, whose remnants are still alive today by the way, for example when the assembly of university professors is called *senate*. The reform authors that followed Schmeitzel were more ambitious and used a different vocabulary to describe universities and along with this their mode of argumentation changed.

## The Cameralistic Approach

In 1768 the professor Johan David Michaelis (1717–1791) published his *Räsonnement über die protestantischen Universitäten*, written before the Seven Years' War of 1757, in which he reviewed almost all aspects of German protestant universities and claimed that he did so “in complete liberty of thought and without any restrictions”. Michaelis asserted that he thought in a comparative perspective. Taking into account the advantages and shortcomings of universities in different parts of Europe he hoped to achieve an improvement, a *Verbesserung*, of all universities.<sup>8</sup> His main criterion for a flourishing university was the benefit, the *Vortheil*, which it generated for the territory. Michaelis explicitly did not consider the traditional argument of the honour of the prince as a defender of the arts and sciences. He also belittled the religious argument that universities fostered and disseminated the true faith.<sup>9</sup> Instead the benefit of a university should be calculated in economic terms. Adopting the Cameralistic axiom that money must not leave a territory but be attracted to it, Michaelis estimated the usefulness of a university according to its economic impact. Based on statistics on how much money arrived at the Imperial post office of a university town, sent by parents to support their sons, Michaelis assumed that the average student would spend the considerable sum of 300 *Reichstaler* per annum. An advantageous university should hence try to increase the number of students (but only of such students who did not depend on stipends).<sup>10</sup>

Michaelis then designed a method which he recommended to territorial governments to implement in order to assess their local university. A government official should analyse the incoming money, recorded at the register of the Imperial post offices, and compare it to the government's spending on the respective university, also taking into account the interest that the original capital of the university would yield if its buildings, collections etc. were to be sold and reinvested. This procedure should then serve as the statistical basis for government policies. A rather small university might cost only 4,000 *Reichstaler* per annum, stated Michaelis, but in case it had only 100 students and the majority of them were poor, the economic impact on the territory would hardly surpass 7,000 *Reichstaler*. However, each *Reichstaler* spent by the government should create at least seven *Reichstaler* of economic activity in order to refinance itself via taxes and charges. Universities that did not meet this criterion should be suspended.<sup>11</sup>

Johann David Michaelis did not once use the traditional language that described a university as a body politic. He explicitly stated that he saw them as a *factory*,<sup>12</sup> but conceded that universities were also important for the sciences and the proliferation of enlightened thought, not least because they offered intellectuals the rare opportunity to earn a living from their studies.<sup>13</sup> All in all Michaelis' argument favoured his personal benefit as a professor of the University of Göttingen. He suggested that smaller universities could be abolished without any harm – increasing the number of students at larger universities like Göttingen – and demanded that outstanding professors like himself should be well paid.<sup>14</sup> Any possible defects of the bigger and thus economically advantageous universities should be mended by the application of *rules of good administration*, for example that a university must not accept students who had been relegated elsewhere.<sup>15</sup> These rules did not stem from one single system of thought but were eclectic and used past and present experience.

To Michaelis, founding new universities seemed unnecessary. He stated that Christian Thomasius and the foundation of the University of Halle in the 1690s was the last time that a *Reformationsgeist*, a spirit of reform, was inevitable in order to overcome a *fehlerhaftes Zeitalter*, an age ripe with defects. Judging his own lifetime, Michaelis declared that it was already very much enlightened and that therefore the foundation of a new university was not recommendable until "we have once again fallen deeply into ignorance, intellectual servitude or pedantism".<sup>16</sup> Johann David Michaelis thus asserted a difference between his own time and the past but implied that a cyclical back-lapse could be possible.

In his *Räsonnement* Johann David Michaelis used a new economic language in order to describe universities. This approach had been first divulged in print by Johann August Schlettwein (1731–1802) in his book *Die Universität in ihrem wahren Flore* of 1763. At the time Schlettwein was a young private lecturer at the University of Jena looking for a

permanent position in the still young academic discipline of Cameralism.<sup>17</sup> The explicit intention of Cameralistic thought was to improve the economy of a territory. One benchmark indicator for this was the level of state revenue. Yet Cameralism took into consideration many different socio-political factors and did not limit itself to a pure financial investigation.<sup>18</sup> Schlettwein for example examined universities under three perspectives: their influence on the instruction and morals of the young generation, their usefulness for the sciences, and lastly their benefit for the wealth of the state. Schlettwein's intention was to think of a *Verfassung*, a university constitution, which would meet these three criteria at the same time.<sup>19</sup> However, this "constitution" was not a new structure of the university as a body politic, but de facto meant its subjection to government action. Schlettwein abandoned the idea of a university as an independent corporation and demanded that the *prince* decide on all relevant questions. For example, professors should be directly appointed by the prince's government according to their aptitude, which was not limited to their scientific reputation but included their capability as a teacher.<sup>20</sup>

A key word in Schlettwein's argument was *Vollkommenheit*, perfection. Through Schlettwein's work the university became the object of the Cameralistic approach of searching perfection in state affairs. In this discourse the only agent capable of bringing about the transformation towards perfection was the prince. His authority could abrogate existing social mechanisms and privileges. As the preference of innovation over precedent was still far from self-evident and the vested interest of the university professors not likely to be in favour of institutional change, reform authors like Schlettwein addressed the head of state. The fact that it was the princes who forced "their" universities to accept Cameralists among the professorate is worth mentioning. It is not surprising that Schlettwein dedicated his work to the prince Friedrich of Mecklenburg, who in 1760 had founded a new university in the town of Bützow, near Rostock. The fact that his father-in-law held a considerable amount of real estate in Mecklenburg helps explain Schlettwein's possible interest in receiving a job offer in Germany's north.<sup>21</sup>

In Schlettwein's argument, however, the prince was already a cypher, meaning the state bureaucracy. When Schlettwein demanded, for example, that university teaching had to follow a strict curriculum, this curriculum should be conceived by *truly great men*.<sup>22</sup> The role of the prince was limited to the mere fact that he had to sanction the changes proposed by his magistrates. His signature was necessary to overrule existing practices, for instance that professors decided themselves which classes were proposed to students.

It is interesting to examine this discrepancy in detail because it is three-fold: Schlettwein explicitly addressed the prince, but he knew that his decisions were being prepared by state officials. Furthermore, his work

appeared as a book on the public market and not as a memoir to the Mecklenburg government. Part of this language of reform was thus that Schlettwein presented himself as an independent mind who sought the best for the public good without any regard to his personal benefit. *Patriot* was the key word used to express this attitude. For example, patriots should fight *the harm done to the state* when a university neglected to control student morals.<sup>23</sup>

Schlettwein had to address three audiences at once: he honoured the prince who would take the decisions, he had to convince the state officials of his reform ideas, and at the same time win the favour of the literary public who would purchase his book. This complex language of reform does not completely match with Immanuel Kant's ideal of public reasoning, largely promoted among the humanities by Jürgen Habermas' *Strukturwandel der Öffentlichkeit*.<sup>24</sup> The works of reform authors like Michaelis and Schlettwein corresponded not to the concept of *public opinion*, taking an apolitical, moral ground above politics, but came along as works of *public spirit*, as can be seen by the use of the patriot topos. The difference is subtle yet crucial for the type of language used in the texts: Reform authors addressed not only an anonymous public but those in charge. Their arguments were not highly philosophical, but marked by the need to make concrete suggestions on possible change. This was also due to the authors' intentions. The publication of a book like *Die Universität in ihrem wahren Flore* was a deliberate move to promote one's own career, not as an apolitical philosopher but as a bureaucrat or university professor.

## A Factory That Defied Its Owner

The pressure towards a university reform intensified in the 1780s. New authors insisted that the prince and its government alter the institutional rules within the universities and oversee and control them from without. The description of the university as a factory became a topos commonly used to describe universities.<sup>25</sup> It is noteworthy that *factory* had no negative connotation at the time, but instead was seen as the advisable method to create wealth according to the spreading of manufactures across Europe.<sup>26</sup> The university could hence be seen as a *gelehrte Manufactur*, a scholarly factory.<sup>27</sup> The professor of law at the University of Erlangen, Karl Philipp Böll (1751–1787), followed this enthusiasm for factories. In his book *Das Universitätswesen in Briefen* of 1782 – which as a motto cited Schlettwein's admonition that patriots should worry about malfunctioning universities – Böll wrote that the administration of universities was not yet enlightened despite the many reform texts that had shown the path. He saw a gap between enlightened thought and the actual state of affairs. The theory of university politics was ahead

of university reality, which had to be modelled according to the reform ideas.<sup>28</sup>

To Böll the culprit for this tardiness of the universities was the professorate, unwilling to implement the transformations demanded by the government. To illustrate his argument Böll dwelt extensively on his favourite metaphor: The professors were the journeymen of the *scientific factory* and the students its customers. The prince was the proprietor who had asked his state official, the *Curator*, to manage his factory.<sup>29</sup> However, the journeymen defied the factory owner and ignored the management:

Laws that are not being executed are like a bell without a clapper: What good does it, if your Excellency [the Curator] prepare the wisest plans, which are then agreed by the ministry, approved by the king, published and pronounced off the lecterns with great clamour – even the university authorities and the young men confirm them by oath–, but in the end the law is ridiculed and not followed?<sup>30</sup>

Böll's conception of how a reform idea became reality is interesting: An expert conceives the plan, the state officials consider and recommend it, the king approves it, and the reform laws are then published in writing as well as by oral promulgation. What was missing, however, was an effective local coercion to assure the implementation of the reform. That is why Böll advised the appointment of a university supervisor on the spot, who had to make sure that the government's orders were being obeyed. Resistance by the professors was to be expected but had to be overcome.<sup>31</sup>

It is an important observation that neither Michaelis nor Schlettwein nor Böll used historical arguments to back their point of view. They treated the universities as institutions without a past that had to be reshaped according to their contemporary needs. The argument did deplore an unsatisfying present (usually this was the poor stand of student morals and their laziness), but drew its force from a better future state. The ideal of an enlightened society was the point of focus, not the return to a better past. Even though Michaelis pretended to take a European comparative perspective, the reform authors did not make use of existing universities as positive examples. On the contrary, they only referred to English and French universities to state explicitly that these could not serve as a role model.<sup>32</sup>

Despite such similarities, if one compares the language of reform used by Schlettwein and Michaelis with the argument developed by Böll, one notices the increasing frustration about the absence of change. Böll himself exclaimed that the reform ideas were already there, put down in *political and administrative books*, but were not

being implemented.<sup>33</sup> This led to an intensification of the argument and of the means advised. However, the critique by Michaelis, Schlettwein, and Böll came from within the university, put forward by scholars who were not yet at the end of their career and who were looking for the support of the government. Therefore, they did not ask for the abolition of universities.

Reform authors who were not part of the existing university system were more radical. The educationist reformer Joachim Heinrich Campe (1746–1818), tutor of the Humboldt brothers, was already a celebrity when he fired a broadside at the universities. In his essay *Von den Universitäten* (1792) he outright demanded that universities should be closed. In order not to mingle with the Cameralistic approach, Campe explicitly refused to use their language and arguments. The question whether a university was a profitable source of income for town and country was to be omitted. *Vernunft* (reason) and *Sittlichkeit* (morality) alone would have to decide on the fate of the universities, declared Campe. If scrutinised under this perspective the universities failed to meet the expectations of an enlightened age.<sup>34</sup>

Joachim Heinrich Campe knew that a debate on university reform was already ongoing and that all kind of propositions were on the table. According to Campe, however, these reform projects aimed only at superficial phenomena or were not realisable, e.g. the idea that professors supervise the assiduity and moral behaviour of their students outside the lecture halls would never work as professors did not have enough time available for this additional task. The propositions aiming at institutional change were also futile, declared Campe. To prove his point he made what one might call an inverted historical argument: What had not changed in a hundred years must be beyond the influence of even the wisest policies.<sup>35</sup> The historical stability of the university thus became an argument against it.

To Campe the solution was obvious: Universities should be shut down and new institutions of higher learning be established. These should be advanced colleges where only useful subjects would be taught.<sup>36</sup> The colleges should be spread out through the territory and each of them be specialised for one subject only: Law, theology, and medicine would not change much. These colleges should teach their students whatever was needed to become a successful practitioner in their discipline and in addition enable them to continue learning after they had left college. The benefit of this fundamental reform was obvious to Campe. Less time would be wasted with theory and student debauchery. Instead the students would acquire relevant professional experience.<sup>37</sup>

For those subjects traditionally associated with the faculty of philosophy, Campe proposed two solutions. Pedagogy and philosophy should be taught in the upper classes of secondary schools. Campe was convinced that the other disciplines – like history – did not need to be university

studies.<sup>38</sup> The arts and humanities would not perish because they were being fostered everywhere. Universities, like the scientific societies and academies, could not claim a monopoly to erudition and science. In the end they were only one player among many others. According to Campe the scientific progress was therefore disjunct from the existence of universities.<sup>39</sup>

Campe did not use the concept of progress. However, he did argue with an inevitable historical change. In his final plea for the abolition of universities, he stated:

Maybe the universities were once necessary, but they are not any longer. Their noxiousness in many important aspects is evident. Young men are being morally corrupted, their health is endangered, they squander their fortune and learn little. Wherever we find the contrary it is nothing but the exception to the rule. Nevertheless the rule has to prevail and thus decide whether or not institutions may persist unchanged.<sup>40</sup>

The past did not legitimise universities. It was the *rule*, i.e. their influence on the common good, which should decide about their future fate. Practical difficulties of the abolition of universities were not to be taken into account given the urgency of the situation. Campe did not propose a concrete path to follow, but like other reform authors he addressed the prince, whom he saw as the *custodian of mankind* and therefore responsible for bringing about the much needed change.<sup>41</sup>

## The Disappearance of the Prince

In the 1790s the prince disappeared as the addressee of the reform texts. In earlier works, the concept of *state* had been used once in a while. Now the state became the main frame in which the argumentation about university reform took place. An informative example for this is the book *Über die Einrichtung und den Zweck der höhern Lehranstalten* (1802) by the Berlin physician Johann Benjamin Erhard (1766–1827). In this work Erhard developed a plan for a national education system and devoted about 200 pages to a “scheme for a perfectly functional university and the means to remodel the existing universities step by step along this ideal”.<sup>42</sup> The book has no dedication and the prince is completely absent within the text.

Erhard’s perspective on the universities was purely functional, taking as a basis that they had to serve the state’s needs, i.e. educate public servants and spread such knowledge among the population that furthered the state’s purpose of assuring the wealth and health of its citizens.<sup>43</sup> The existing universities were even a threat to the state. Their corporational character was able to create a monopoly. They also sheltered useless and

possibly even dangerous forms of erudition like theology. Erhard therefore demanded:

The sciences, which the state has to support, are only those, which are necessary to the state. Such sciences touch the well-being of everyone, or of the public good in general or the relation of the state towards other states. . . . If scholars join each other to create a monopoly for their erudition, the state must not protect them, and thus the state may not transfer any rights of a corporation to them. . . . If the erudition of the scholar does not serve the non-scholar, but is rather a mere pleasure of the scholar, he may not claim to any assistance by the state.<sup>44</sup>

Universities were no longer *little republics*. They were considered as institutions that had to be regulated by the state. If they served all citizens and the state in general, they could claim public financing, but if they created a monopoly this monopoly had to be broken up.<sup>45</sup>

When Johann Benjamin Erhard criticised the universities for being monopolies that hampered and hindered the concurrence of other scholars he probably thought of his own career. Gifted with intellectual talents but born as the son of a simple Nuremberg craftsman, Erhard spent several years at various universities, interested foremost in philosophy but studying medicine and practicing as a physician to make a living.<sup>46</sup> In his reform text of 1802 Erhard therefore concluded his argument by stating that only someone “who has gained the applause of the public, whether as an author or as a practitioner” can become a university professor.<sup>47</sup> Erhard had accomplished both. Yet since he could not hope to make an academic career within the existing university system, Erhard became a fervent opponent of it, fighting it from the outside.

## Conclusion

Around 1800 the definition of universities as autonomous body politics had become obsolete. Instead they were conceived of as public institutions of higher learning that had to fulfil a public mission, i.e. the instruction and formation of social elites. This conceptual change was reflected by student guidebooks. The prorector of the University of Leipzig, Christian Daniel Beck (1757–1832), put it down in his *Grundriß zu hodegetischen Vorlesungen* (1808) as follows:

In Germany institutions of higher and free learning are called “universities”, when they offer a coherent and scientific education in all fields of knowledge, both practical and theoretical. Their purpose is to prepare young students for their future profession.<sup>48</sup>

The defining attribute of a university was no longer its corporative character but the level of education, its scope (*all fields of knowledge*), and its purpose of instructing the students to become useful members of society. The change of this conceptualisation of a university was brought about by a discourse on university reform which used a new vocabulary in order to integrate the existing institutions into the unfolding bureaucratic order of the territorial states.<sup>49</sup> This also corresponded to the general need of finding new, up-to-date descriptions for existing institutions within the new mental framework of what we would today call *society*, but was conceptualised as *state*.

As the potential objects of reform multiplied in the second half of the 18th century, authors discovered the institution *university* as an object of possible improvement and in consequence the *Hohe Schulen* were also subjected to public scrutiny. The reform authors used a language that addressed the prince and his bureaucracy, however, and not an anonymous public alone. Accordingly their propositions aimed at an intervention of the government into the traditionally independent sphere of the universities and made concrete suggestions how the usefulness of universities for the common good could be augmented.

Personal ambition played an important role. Reform authors advanced such arguments that increased their reputation and could possibly help boost their career, be it as a professor or as a state bureaucrat. However, reform arguments had to overcome a conservative opposition, most of all by the vested interest of the professorate. Furthermore, rivalling reform ideas competed with one another throughout the last 20 years of the 18th century. Authors who were part of the existing university system sided with the expanding state bureaucracies but sought only specific changes. Reform authors outside the university system were less restrained and even demanded a total revision of higher education, therefore even arguing for the abolition of universities. This struggle for the victorious redefinition of what a university was and what it should be unfolded on the public stage. It was this language of reform – subordinating the institutional structure and the subjects taught at the universities to the unquestioned aim of usefulness – that became so predominant in the years around 1800 that it eventually triggered a discursive counterattack: the birth of the ideology of *Wissenschaft* and *Bildung* by German philosophers.

## Notes

1. W. Clark, *Academic Charisma and the Origins of the Research University* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2006).
2. Exceptions are M. Asche, “Das ‘große Universitätssterben’ in den Jahrzehnten um 1800: Zu Reformbedürftigkeit und Reform(un)fähigkeit deutscher Universitäten im Zeichen von Aufklärung und Utilitarismus”, in

*Hochschulreformen früher und heute – zwischen Autonomie und gesellschaftlichem Gestaltungsanspruch*, ed. R. Pöppinghege and D. Klenke (Köln: SH-Verlag, 2011), 35–37; and F. Cadilhon, J. Mondot, and J. Verger, eds., *Universités et institutions universitaires au XVIIIe siècle: Entre modernisation et tradition* (Bordeaux: Presses universitaires de Bordeaux, 1999). The commendable recent historiography at the University of Berlin illustrates how little we know about the reform debate before the foundation of that university in 1810, cf. H.E. Tenorth, ed., *Gründung und Blütezeit der Universität zu Berlin 1810–1918* (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 2012), 10–16.

3. For an influential example of how the ideology of “Wissenschaft” held by idealists like Fichte has contorted the perspective of historiography, cf. H. Schelsky, *Einsamkeit und Freiheit: Idee und Gestalt der deutschen Universität und ihrer Reform* (Düsseldorf: Rowohlt Verlag, 1971).
4. J. Lange, *Die Gefahren der akademischen Freiheit: Ratgeberliteratur für Studenten im Zeitalter der Aufklärung (1670–1820)* (München: De Gruyter Oldenbourg, 2017).
5. G. Hertzberg, “Schmeitzel, Martin”, *Allgemeine Deutsche Biographie* 31 (1890): 633.
6. M. Schmeitzel, *Rechtschaffener Academicus, oder Gründliche Anleitung, Wie ein Academischer Student Seine Studien und Leben gehörig einzurichten habe...* (Halle, 1738), 69.
7. Ibid., preface, n.p., 17.
8. J.D. Michaelis, *Räsonnement über die protestantischen Universitäten in Deutschland* (Frankfurt am Main: Andraeische Buchhandlung, 1768), 1: II.
9. Ibid., 2.
10. Ibid., 2–7.
11. Ibid., 19–22.
12. Ibid., 71.
13. Ibid., 110.
14. Ibid., 263.
15. Ibid., 281.
16. Ibid., 281–282.
17. D. Klippel and U. Andersch, “Schlettwein, Johann August”, *Neue Deutsche Biographie* 23 (2007): 66–68.
18. T. Sokoll, “Kameralismus”, *Enzyklopädie der Neuzeit* 6 (2007): 290–299.
19. J.A. Schlettwein, *Die Universität in ihrem wahren Flore* (Jena, 1763), 13–14.
20. Ibid., 17–22.
21. Klippel and Andersch, “Schlettwein, Johann August”.
22. Schlettwein, *Die Universität in ihrem wahren Flore*, 27.
23. Ibid., 35.
24. J. Habermas, *Strukturwandel der Öffentlichkeit: Untersuchungen zu einer Kategorie der bürgerlichen Gesellschaft* (Neuwied: Hermann Luchterhand Verlag, 1962), 118–133.
25. M. Füssel, “Bergwerke, Fabriken, Handelshäuser: Die Universitäten im Ökonomisierungsdiskurs des 18. Jahrhunderts”, in *Kalkulierte Gelehrsamkeit: Zur Ökonomisierung der Universitäten im 18. Jahrhundert*, ed. E. Harding (Wiesbaden: Harassowitz Verlag, 2016), 41–59.
26. J.H. Zedler, ed., *Grosses vollständiges Universal-Lexicon aller Wissenschaften und Künste . . . , Vol. 9* (Halle: Zedler, 1735), 35–36.
27. B. Dölemeyer, “Die Universität als ‘gelehrte Manufactur’: Reformideen des aufgeklärten Absolutismus in Hessen-Darmstadt und Hessen-Kassel”, in *Reich, Regionen und Europa in Mittelalter und Neuzeit: Festschrift für Peter Moraw*, ed. P.-J. Heinig, et al. (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 2000), 565–581.

28. F.K.P. Böll, *Das Universitätswesen in Briefen* (Erlangen, 1782), preface, n.p.
29. Ibid., 4.
30. Ibid., 77–78.
31. Ibid., 76–78.
32. Michaelis, *Räsonnement über die protestantischen Universitäten*, 4:165–166.
33. Böll, *Das Universitätswesen in Briefen*, preface, n.p.
34. J.H. Campe, “Von den Universitäten”, in *Allgemeine Revision des gesamten Schul- und Erziehungswesens von einer Gesellschaft practischer Erzieher*, ed. J.H. Campe (Wien, 1792), 16:145–146.
35. Ibid., 159.
36. Ibid., 179–180.
37. Ibid., 174–177.
38. Ibid., 180–181.
39. Ibid., 216–218.
40. Ibid., 219.
41. Ibid., 220.
42. J.B. Erhard, *Ueber die Einrichtung und den Zweck der höhern Lehranstalten* (Berlin, 1802), 68.
43. Ibid., 100–101.
44. Ibid., 71–77.
45. Regarding the last sentence of the quote the “mere pleasure of the scholar”: The years around 1800 may be the time of birth of the critique that universities were too often “ivory towers”, even if this metaphor was not used until the middle of the 19th century.
46. A. Richter, “Erhard, Johann Benjamin”, *Allgemeine Deutsche Biographie* 6 (1877): 200–201.
47. Erhard, *Über die Einrichtung und den Zweck der höhern Lehranstalten*, 261.
48. C.D. Beck, *Grundriß zu hodegetischen Vorlesungen* (Leipzig: Schwickert, 1808), 3. The quotation in its German original reads: “Universitäten werden in Deutschland höhere und freye Lehranstalten genannt, auf welchen ein zusammenhängender und wissenschaftlicher Unterricht über alle gelehrte Kenntnisse theoretisch und praktisch ertheilt wird, um studirende Jünglinge zu ihrem künftigen Berufe, zu welchem solche Kenntnisse erforderlich werden, gehörig vorzubereiten und auszurüsten.”
49. D. Willoweit, “Struktur und Funktion intermediärer Gewalten im Ancien Régime”, in *Gesellschaftliche Strukturen als Verfassungsproblem: Intermediäre Gewalten, Assoziationen, Öffentliche Körperschaften im 18. und 19. Jahrhundert*, ed. H. Quaritsch (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 1978), 9–27.

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## Section III

# Thematic Vocabularies in Specific Contexts



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# 9 A Kind of Sovereignty?

## Legitimising Freedom of Contract in the 18th Century

*Johannes Süßmann*

### 1. Heuristic Preliminaries

#### 1.1. Relevance

Freedom of contract, grasped as a personal right of individuals to close contracts, is considered here as the crucial indicator of civil society.<sup>1</sup> If we may start from the master narrative related to the term, which admittedly being too simplistic might nevertheless be useful from a heuristic point of view, we can assume that freedom of contract, conceived as a personal right to dispose of one's own property and one's own work, could not exist in the corporative society of the *ancien régime*, since people saw neither property<sup>2</sup> nor work<sup>3</sup> as freely disposable entities. Both were indispensable foundations of the corporations' maintenance. Therefore, the right of individuals to contract had been restricted as well to their corporations' consent as to the allowances of the *iustitia distributiva*. Free-market capitalism, on the contrary, requires individuals to have both their property and their labour power at their disposal while pursuing their own economic interests. Thus, modern civil society based on free-market capitalism has transformed freedom of contract into a personal right and a basis of social interaction.

Historians of law have described this transformation as a movement “from status to contract”.<sup>4</sup> This seems to be both too linear and too teleological a view because – as Max Weber has already shown<sup>5</sup> – we can find many contractual social relations in the midst of corporative societies, while individuals still belong to non-contractual communities such as families or nations in modern civil society. The master narrative may become more convincing if we specify that it firstly relies on a heuristic juxtaposition of current ideas of historical social orders (the corporative society being conceptualised in terms of communities, common good, and personal duties, whereas modern civil society in the liberal tradition is thought of as relying on individuals and their free association) and, secondly, that the transformation according to this model did not replace status by contract but only changed the preponderance within the two

kinds of social relations. Therefore, my chapter will demonstrate how this happened and reveal the languages of reform contributed to it.

### 1.2. Sources

If we ask where the relevant languages of reform are to be found, we are confronted with an overwhelming richness of sources. Firstly, there was an everyday practice of contracting in all 18th-century societies. It has left behind innumerable contract documents often containing narrative sections with reasons why the contracts had been concluded, adding up to an unmanageable discourse of practical repetitions and innovations. Secondly, there was a contractual law which can be found in the traditions of customary law as well as in the great codifications of the 18th century – a normative discourse the historians of law concentrate on.<sup>6</sup> Viewed as a legal practice, it can be found, thirdly, in the court rulings on contracts put into question. The endless collection of decisions and their reasons has been partly highlighted by anthropologists and historians of everyday life, e.g. in respect of marriage, heritage, labour, or enterprises.<sup>7</sup> Fourthly, there was a theory of contract law, partly developed by protagonists of codification reflecting on the principles of their material, partly by teachers of law attempting to arrange their material systematically, partly by political or economic philosophers arguing in favour of or against some legislative reforms.<sup>8</sup> Finally, we find a political philosophy, which declared principles of contract law to be parts of natural law in order to develop comprehensive theories of *social contract* or *political contract*.<sup>9</sup> The latter two discourses seem to be most relevant for the subject matter discussed here but they cannot be analysed appropriately without some glances at the contract law they refer to.

### 1.3. Approach

The relevant languages of reform have to be analysed with regard to their particular preconditions – in the case of a judicial concept like freedom of contract, these are national ones. The reasons for this approach are language, genre, and historical context. If it is true that words gain meaning only within their relations, be they grammatical, textual, or pragmatic, these frameworks are decisive and have to be taken into consideration before we can integrate the findings into a more abstract history of ideas or concepts. Language influences meaning by a tradition of usage, i.e. a halo of connotation, an established set of synonyms and antonyms. Genre influences meaning by institutionalising certain usages and thereby also particular relationships between authors, texts, and recipients. The historical context provides for specific conditions such as the actual law or the relevant protagonists, for specific problems and for particular situations of crisis and change.<sup>10</sup> The national contextualisation does

not imply that there have been only indigenous developments. On the contrary, it will become clear that the languages of reform in Germany, France, and the Great Britain referred to the same master texts and that they constantly regarded each other and learned from each other. But by no means did this prevent it from branching out into national specificities.

#### 1.4. Terminology

What are we looking for? The problem is that the term “liberty of contract” does not appear in the sources. It is a coinage of the 19th century and has been transferred retrospectively by historians of law to what they identified as the origins of their own economic and social relations. Notwithstanding whether they found these origins in the *Code civil* or in Adam Smith, their search has been criticised resolutely,<sup>11</sup> for it tends to project much younger ideas of *laissez-faire* capitalism or individual autonomy on the texts of the 18th century, thereby obscuring their characteristics. We shall return to this debate in a moment. At first, we note that the 18th-century languages of reform did not refer to liberty of contract explicitly. Instead, they dealt with contracts of each kind as well as with the right to have control over one’s own property and work. They discuss these topics within broader contexts such as obligation, personal freedom, and the right to pursue one’s own happiness.

Thus our problem turns into our first result: Freedom of contract evidently was not considered as a matter of its own.<sup>12</sup> It was not separated from higher-ranking principles but derived from them. We may deduce from this that the authors of the 18th century did not regard freedom of contract as an economic, legal, or social principle, even less that for them to liberate it was an aim in itself. This might seem astonishing if one thinks of the contract theories in natural law, but perhaps these theories have also been misinterpreted by looking at them through the lenses of 19th-century liberalism.

#### 1.5. Our Question

In early modern times sovereignty became the central principle of political theory. If freedom of contract was always a derivative of other principles in the 18th century, one should assume that there also has to be a connection with sovereignty. This goes without saying as far as we argue on the level of categories. In private law freedom of contract is considered as an expression of personal autonomy (*Privatautonomie/autonomie de la volonté*). It is understood as the practice of self-determination. To obtain freedom of contract means to transfer sovereignty to the individuals. Hence, freedom of contract is the legal form of an individualistic interpretation of the people’s sovereignty.

Yet again: 18th-century languages of reform did not explicitly connect these two categories. Perhaps this is the reason why the connection has – as far as I can see – yet to be brought up in research. My chapter will explore the correlation between freedom of contract and sovereignty. Therefore, it has to start with demonstrating that the writers of the 18th century likewise saw this correlation and asking how they dealt with it (part 2). Thereafter, I will sketch a comparative view on three different ways of justifying freedom of contract: in Germany,<sup>13</sup> in France,<sup>14</sup> and in the Great Britain<sup>15</sup> (part 3). My choice of these examples resulted from the assumption that the different national conditions should have produced diverse languages of reform and diverging ways to justify freedom of contract as an expression of sovereignty. To conclude we shall return to the upheaval of perspectives on the problem that we are witnessing now.

### 1.6. *Controversies*

Many aspects of our subject are highly controversial. It would be astonishing if it was otherwise. The term *freedom of contract* was coined as an ideological slogan within the economic and political conflicts of the 19th century. From its very establishment it has provoked fervent criticism and it continues to do so unfailingly. Marx and the socialist movement made a first point by drawing attention to the fact that there is no real freedom of contract, neither between the entrepreneur and his or her employees, nor between the landlord and his or her tenants, nor between a big concern and its customers due to the inequality of bargaining power that tends to destroy the option of not to contract at all or to negotiate the terms – at least for one of the involved parties. Therefore, in the 20th century many legislatures implicated mandatory terms into contracts by law, justifying this either by a paternalistic policy (a renewed *iustitia distributiva*) or by social-liberal cares of the actual functioning of free markets and the participation of the economically weaker parties alike. Today, being confronted with international data-collecting monopolists whose market power and data exploitation is not restricted by any governmental interventions, we easily acknowledge that this is still an ardent problem.

A second line of criticism, starting with Hegel and developed further by Max Weber,<sup>16</sup> states that the popular self-description of modern civil society is a one-sided misunderstanding: for it contents itself with looking at the free and self-interested association of individuals by contracts, which is a part of society, but neglects the individuals' belonging to communities, which is a social relation with a logic of its own that perhaps even becomes more important in modern society.<sup>17</sup> According to this view, society (with contractual relations) and community are not

alternatives but interdependent kinds of social relations. Thus a history of freedom of contract must also pay tribute to its counterpart – that is to the non-contractual relations, although they may have been hushed up in the sources.<sup>18</sup>

The identification with social-liberal welfare states has inspired a third line of criticism, probably the most radical one, namely a revisionist history of freedom of contract with a keen interest in the restraints and counter-currents, culminating in the thesis that freedom of contract as such is a myth.<sup>19</sup> Today's historians of law do not even detect it in the heyday of 19th-century economical and political liberalism,<sup>20</sup> let alone in the discussions of the 18th century or the new codifications of the revolutionary period around 1800. Instead historians argue that freedom of contract has been invented in the second half of the 19th century, partly by some jurists who misunderstood the classic liberal political theory of their times and transferred but a section of it into jurisdiction, partly by their political opponents in order to exaggerate the social evils they fought against. Only then would this chimaera have been identified with the economic and social ideas of the French Revolution and the *Code civil*.<sup>21</sup>

The result of this revisionist view is that the upheavals of the Revolution are minimised. Either one argues that the deputies of the National Convention and later on the jurists in the preparatory commission of the *Code civil* only executed the ideas of the *philosophes*,<sup>22</sup> or one reduces revolutionary law to mere proclamations,<sup>23</sup> or one concentrates on the elementary forms of revolutionary legislation and claims that they already existed in Roman law.<sup>24</sup> In any case one emphasises continuity by asserting that neither the *Declaration of the Rights of Man and of Citizens* nor the *Code civil* established freedom of contract as a personal right, as 19th-century historians would have done it. But under the surface these documents were just as community-orientated and paternalistic as contract law had been previously.<sup>25</sup> This would mean that the subject of this chapter does not exist at all.

The question will have to be decided by analysing the sources. However, we can already differentiate between the convincing concern to deconstruct 19th-century myths on the one hand and the not-so-convincing levelling of historical distinction on the other. To mark the difference between late 19th-century liberalism and the ideas of the French Revolution does not necessarily lead to equalising the revolutionary contract theory with that of the *Ancien Régime*. Arguments like this betray a remarkable lack of differentiation. Contrary to ideal types and heuristic juxtapositions, in historical reality there can exist more than just two different contract theories. If we try to integrate the convincing parts of that criticism into our argument, it will allow us to historicise freedom of contract much more successfully than previous attempts.

## 2. Contract Theory and Sovereignty

Let us start with the *Code civil*, art. 1134:

Les conventions légalement formées tiennent lieu de loi à ceux qui les ont faites.<sup>26</sup>

The context of this often-cited sentence throws a light on its meaning. The article is to be found in Book III, Title III, which deals with “Contracts or conventional obligations in general”<sup>27</sup> and more specifically with “the effects of obligations”. Its aim is to explain that contracts are obliging. They have the same obliging force as laws do. They have to be fulfilled like laws.

It should be noted that the article does not say that contracts *are* laws. Even less does it replace law with contracts. Rather, the *Code civil* presupposes that there is law and that law is mightier than contracts, as the article goes on:

Elles [=les conventions, JS] ne peuvent être révoquées que de leur consentement mutuel, ou pour les causes que la loi autorise.

In the *Code civil*, law is continually referred to as a framework of contracts. It stipulates not only who has the capacity to contract (in addition to minors, married women are excluded too and “généralement tout ceux auxquels la loi a interdit certains contrats”)<sup>28</sup> but also that a contract must have “a licit cause for the obligation”, in order to be valid.<sup>29</sup>

La cause est illicite quand elle est prohibée par la loi, quand elle est contraire aux bonnes mœurs ou à l’ordre public.<sup>30</sup>

Les conventions obligent non seulement à ce qui y est exprimé, mais encore à tous les suites que l’équité, l’usage ou la loi donnent à l’obligation d’après sa nature.<sup>31</sup>

*Laissez-faire* freedom of contract looks different. Obviously the *Code civil* restricts contracting in several ways: by excluding wives and persons without civil rights as well as by prohibiting certain terms on which to contract; most of all by adding to the self-inflicted obligations those resulting from equity, usage, and law.<sup>32</sup> In so doing the *Code civil* presupposes that there are other obliging forces besides contracts and law; “equity and usage” open up a gateway for the communities and the *iustitia distributiva*.<sup>33</sup>

In these respects the *Code civil* may appear quite traditional, even conservative. Yet one should not judge too rashly. The traditional elements change their meaning because they are given a new centre: the individual contracting proprietor. He is defined by having things at his disposal that reify and individualise property.<sup>34</sup> He is highlighted in all

sorts of transactions (about 1,700 articles out of 2,281 deal with property). His intention becomes the decisive precondition of every contract,<sup>35</sup> setting free self-interest within the limits of the law. This is neither the common-good rhetoric of the paternalistic policy state nor individualism unbound by the minimal state of *laissez-faire* economics. It is something in between – let us call it individualism encouraged by the *volonté général*.

With this we can return to article 1134. If contracts are ascribed the force of law, the individual is addressed as legislator. Since he is the only origin of his contracts, it is up to him to decide on his personal obligation. While he is equally obliged to equity and to the law that belongs to communities and being a citizen, he has the freedom to determine his civic life by his contracts. Private life thus becomes the sphere of a private legislation, corresponding with the political participation of the individual in the *volonté general*.

Legislation is considered the core of sovereignty since the days of Bodin – a fact that the jurists in the preparatory commission of the *Code civil* could not have ignored. Thus their way to emphasise the obligation of contracts has a second meaning. It promises that contracts may become a means of self-determination and shaping civil society. It invites individuals to make use of this possibility in order to gain sovereignty over their own lives as well as over civil society and politics. Obviously the promise was understood in 19th-century France. It needed only a few decades until the liberal and individualistic implications of this article were declared to have been its actual meaning from the beginning.

Where did the entanglement of freedom and obligation come from? A certain school of historians of law declares CC art. 1134 to be just a translation of the principle already formulated in Roman law: “*Pacta sunt servanda*”. However, this overlooks what is specific here. Most historians therefore point at Grotius as the origin of the *topos* in early modern times.<sup>36</sup> Grotius has become decisive because of four reasons. Firstly, he identified civil law with contract law.

nam naturalis juris mater est ipsa natura humana, quæ nos etiamsi re nulla indigeremus, ad societatem mutuam appetendam ferret: civilis vero juris mater est ipsa ex consensu obligatio, quae cum ex naturali jure vim suam habeat, potest natura hujus quoque juris quasi proavia dici.<sup>37</sup>

It is the force of contractual obligation that creates society and civil right. Thus, contract law is more than just a *pars pro toto* here. It is the constituting source of society and civil right. The quotation also makes clear the second reason why Grotius has become so important. He embedded contract law = civil law into natural law. “*Cum ex naturali jure vim suam habeat*”; natural law became the yardstick for the measure for contract law. This opened up the possibility to compare the existing customary

laws with natural law. Contract law and natural law should coincide. If they did not, if there could be found tensions between them, this became an impulse of critique – and of a reform debate. Grotius outlined the constellation, triggering off the intense natural law discussion of the two hundred years to follow. He marks the common origin of all the languages of reform we are interested in.

The third reason for his importance is his establishment of a new idea of contract. The canonists thought that contracts get their obligation from the promise each party has given. For them the obligation rests on morality and the relation of each contracting party with God. Grotius, on the contrary, was the first to derive the obligation of contracts from the mutual consent of the contracting parties. Evidently this changed the understanding of the *pacta sunt servanda* formula completely. It opened up the possibility not only to set aside contracts if they do not result from mutual consent, but also to declare a contract null and void in mutual consent. So contracts became secular and dynamic.<sup>38</sup>

Last but not least, the fourth reason: Grotius saw in contracts the core of civil law and civil society. However, he transferred contracts to the law of nations in the course of his own argument (book II, chapters 11 and 12). What governments do when they form alliances and make treaties in war, according to Grotius, is a kind of contracting. This should ram home that treaties are as obligatory as contracts. It should give treaties a binding character. It should prevent governments from breaking alliances. Yet here too this established a second meaning, which was not Grotius's intention and which only came to light in the long run. To form alliances was a privilege of governments. It had become the most important indicator of sovereignty in the treaty of Munster and Osnabrück. Grotius's interpretation of formal alliances as a kind of contract could also be understood the other way around: not only as a transfer of contract as a principle of civil law to the law of nations but also as a transfer of sovereignty to the contracting parties in civil law. It was so understood not so very long after Grotius by the theoreticians of the contract of society when they compared the state of nature in which the European powers lived with the state of nature all human beings lived in before the formation of society and state. In this state of nature individuals are sovereigns only to be obliged by their own will and their own contracts.

Let us conclude: Contracts indeed have been looked at as an indicator of sovereignty, by forming alliances as well as by legislation. At the same time in Grotius we have found the origin of our languages of reform in the new codifications of civil law around 1800, their preliminary end.

### **3. From Grotius to the New Contract Law Around 1800**

It would be a fascinating project to compare the ways in which the concept of freedom of contract was transformed in certain languages of

reform during the 18th century. It would illuminate how heterogeneous the paths to civil society have been in different countries – due to different legal traditions, regulatory frameworks, and political interests. It would also uncover the hidden entanglement between the varying languages of reform, which allows for listening to them as voices of one great choir, articulating one great transformation. A comparative history of this transformation is still awaited. It can be outlined here by looking at three case studies and bringing together what one would have to take into consideration.

The simplest example is Germany.<sup>39</sup> Here contract theory was the domain of teachers of natural law, funded by princes to justify their policy and codification projects. The connection between practical reforms like the *Codex Maximilianeus bavaricus civilis* (1756), the *Codex Theresianus* (1766), the *Josephinische Gesetzbuch* (1787), and the *Allgemeine Landrecht für die Preußischen Staaten* (1794) on the one hand and theoretical discussions on the other hand was very close. For this “older school of natural law”, for authors like Christian Thomasius<sup>40</sup> and Christian Wolff,<sup>41</sup> a personal right to contract did only exist in the state of nature, and it was used but to form the primary contract of society in which the individuals forfeit their freedom of contract, obliging themselves to the common good of communities and the orders of a strong policy state. Thus freedom of contract here was a means to justify the loss of personal liberty.<sup>42</sup>

This constellation changed at the end of the 18th century when the authors of the Scottish enlightenment were read and the influences of the American and the French Revolutions began to be felt. For the authors of the “younger school of natural law” freedom of contract belonged to personal rights which were thought to be unalienable and had to be protected by society and the political order. Most influential became Kant. His ethics and philosophy of law<sup>43</sup> marked a new level of reflection that served as the point of departure for all the following philosophers of law like Fichte and Hegel, and impressed a whole generation of ambitious civil servants whose hour came with the Prussian reforms. While Kant is often read as a promoter of radical individualism, here it should be shown that on the contrary he struggles with the problem of sociability. Therefore it is by no means a misunderstanding that for the Prussian reformers freedom of contract remained a “freedom for the state”, as Thomas Nipperdey has put it,<sup>44</sup> not a freedom from the state. Sovereignty became a moral quality, not a political one.

More complex is the situation in the French-speaking world. Here the translations of Grotius and Pufendorf, prepared by the Huguenot Jean Barbeyrac in his Swiss and Dutch exile, were the points of departure.<sup>45</sup> Barbeyrac’s books were much more than just translations. By commenting and criticising the original authors, Barbeyrac adapted their new theories of natural law to the French situation. For him natural law

was a weapon against the crown's despotic injuries of law – a tendency that also inspired his compatriot Jean-Jacques Burlamaqui. This did not hinder French jurists like Robert-Joseph Pothier to systemise existing contract law with the help of natural law,<sup>46</sup> thereby preparing the codification of the different custumals as well as the ground for the discussion of freedom of contract among the *philosophes*. Although their theory of contract was in no way unanimous, they stuck to using natural law theories of contract critically. The same can be said about the political economists.<sup>47</sup> Although having different arguments and different aims, they all criticised the restrictions of contracting by the law and argued for liberating reforms. However the spirit of opposition led them further to the point where both law and the constitution were at stake. Economic policy increasingly appeared contradictory as public debt and sclerotic land ownership additionally weakened the reputation of the crown as a paternalistic legislator. Its whole relationship with the society of producers and proprietors became problematic.

As a result political economists as well as philosophers were divided up into two parties: one that addressed civil society by conceiving freedom of contract as an aspect of personal liberty against the crown; the other, addressing the government, argued for a transformation that should oblige the legislative and executive power to organise and protect freedom of contract. It should be demonstrated how the specifics of the *Declaration of the Rights of Man and of Citizens*, of the *loi Allarde*, the *loi Le Chappelier*, and the *Code civil* resulted from different ways of synthesising both approaches. Here popular sovereignty became an interaction of taking possession of the state and assuring civil liberty against it.

As far as the Great Britain is concerned, we can identify a completely different situation. After the Glorious Revolution there was not felt a need to change the constitution but to clarify and to explain it. Locke and others did this by means of a contractual theory that committed government to the consent of the governed and conceived the legislative and executive power as a means of protecting natural right, especially life, liberty, and property. On the theoretical level, thus, freedom of contract already appeared as having been reached, whereas in practice it remained a privilege of people blessed with monetary wealth. Land-owners, for instance, were bound by many restrictions, even more so all other people who belonged to corporations and communities. This became a problem in proportion to the spread of market-economy. Furthermore, the beginnings of industrialisation made it necessary to transform labour, too, into a disposable good. Adam Ferguson and Adam Smith were the first who discussed the consequences of the advancing division of labour. Their insights made clear that contract law had to be reformed. Another impulse came from the American Revolutionaries, who sharpened the theories of social contract. However, practical consequences were held back by the conservative turn against the French

Revolution and continental solutions. What freedom of contract meant under the auspices of a specific British liberty and popular sovereignty remained undecided for a long time. In the end, it was up to the revolutionary wars to broaden the idea of it. Practical reforms, however, reached legislation only in the 19th century.

#### 4. Back to the Future

The research group whose results are presented in this book started its work in 2014 – around midterm of Barack Obama's second presidency. At this very time opposition against neo-liberalism, free trade agreements, and globalised markets came from the left: from NGOs like ATTAC, new social movements like Occupy, publicists like Naomi Klein, and intellectuals like Slavoj Žižek. Heterogeneous as they are, their line of argument intended to defend political participation and democratic rules as relying necessarily on economic self-determination and sovereignty. The common adversaries were a globalised financial capitalism and multinational companies dictating bone-crushing contracts in the name of free markets.

In the meantime prefixes have changed completely. With the rise of authoritarian populist movements all over the world, critique of freedom of contract has become the issue of a protective right-wing policy that is primarily directed against allegedly uncontrolled migration, cultural amalgamation, cosmopolitanism, and “unfair” trade relations. Even the perception of freedom of contract underwent a radical change in no time, let alone the perspectives on its history. Nobody knows whereto this will lead. Yet two points are clear: The topic will remain a crucial point of political and social debates, and the very experience of economic protectionism combined with aggressive nationalism will remind us of the liberating and emancipative potentials within the freedom of contract debates of the 18th century.

#### Notes

1. M. Riedel, “Gesellschaft, bürgerliche”, in *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe: Historisches Lexikon zur politisch-sozialen Sprache in Deutschland*, ed. O. Brunner, W. Conze, and R. Koselleck (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1975), 2:719–800.
2. D. Schwab, “Eigentum”, in *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe: Historisches Lexikon zur politisch-sozialen Sprache in Deutschland*, ed. O. Brunner, W. Conze, and R. Koselleck (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1975), 2:65–115; E. Botsch, “Propriété, Propriétaire”, in *Handbuch politisch-sozialer Grundbegriffe in Frankreich 1680–1820*, ed. R. Reichardt and H.-J. Lüsebrink (München: R. Oldenbourg, 1992), 73–96.
3. W. Conze, “Arbeit”, in *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe: Historisches Lexikon zur politisch-sozialen Sprache in Deutschland*, ed. O. Brunner, W. Conze, and R. Koselleck (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1975), 1:154–215; G. van den Heuvel, “Laboureur, Paysan”, in *Handbuch politisch-sozialer Grundbegriffe in*

*Frankreich 1680–1820*, ed. R. Reichardt and H.-J. Lüsebrink (München: R. Oldenbourg, 2000), 53–88.

4. “We may say that the movement of the progressive societies has hitherto been a movement *from status to contract*.” H.S. Maine, *Ancient Law: Its Connection With the Early History of Society, and Its Relation to Modern Ideas*, 6th ed. (London: John Murray, 1876), 170 (italics in original). Similarly F. Tönnies, *Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft: Abhandlung des Communismus und des Socialismus als empirischer Culturformen* (Leipzig: Fues, 1887), 212–214. In English: *Community & Society*, trans. and ed. by C.P. Loomis (New York, NY: Harper & Row, 1963). Cf. H. Mohnhaupt, “Vertragskonstruktion und fingierter Vertrag zur Sicherung von Normativität: Gesetz, Privileg, Verfassung”, in *Gesellschaftliche Freiheit und vertragliche Bindung in Rechtsgeschichte und Philosophie: Liberté sociale et lien contractuel dans l'histoire du droit et la philosophie*, ed. J.-F. Kervégan and H. Mohnhaupt (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1999), 5.
5. M. Weber, *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft – Die Wirtschaft und die gesellschaftlichen Ordnungen und Mächte: Nachlaß*, vol. 1: *Gemeinschaften* (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 2001).
6. K.-P. Nanz, *Die Entstehung des allgemeinen Vertragsbegriffs im 16. bis 18. Jahrhundert* (München: Schweitzer, 1985); W. Scherrer, *Die geschichtliche Entwicklung des Prinzips der Vertragsfreiheit* (Basel: Helbing & Lichtenhahn, 1948); J.-P. Lévy and A. Castaldo, *Histoire du droit civil*, 2nd ed. (Paris: Dalloz, 2010); F. Wieacker, *Privatrechtsgeschichte der Neuzeit unter besonderer Berücksichtigung der deutschen Entwicklung*, 2nd ed. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1967); H. Coing, *Zur Geschichte des Privatrechtssystems* (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1962).
7. See e.g. J. Bart, “Pacte et contrat dans la pratique française (XVIe–XVIIIe siècles)”, in *Towards a General Law of Contract*, ed. J. Barton (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 1990), 125–137; T. Keiser, *Vertragszwang und Vertragsfreiheit im Recht der Arbeit von der Frühen Neuzeit bis in die Moderne* (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 2013); M. Mitterauer, *Historische Verwaltungsforschung* (Wien: Böhlau, 2013).
8. See e.g. J. Gordley, *The Philosophical Origins of Modern Contract Doctrine* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991); J.D. Harke, *Vorenthalten und Verpflichtung: Philosophische Ansichten der Austauschgerechtigkeit und ihr rechts-historischer Hintergrund* (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 2005); M.-P. Weller, *Die Vertragstreue: Vertragsbindung – Naturalerfüllungsgrundsatz – Leistungstreue* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2009), 70–90.
9. Mohnhaupt, “Vertragskonstruktion”; W. Kersting, *Die politische Philosophie des Gesellschaftsvertrags* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1994).
10. D. Grimm, “Soziale, wirtschaftliche und politische Voraussetzungen der Vertragsfreiheit: Eine vergleichende Skizze”, in *La Formazione storica del diritto moderno in Europa*, ed. Società italiana di storia del diritto (Florence: Olschki, 1977), 3:1221–1248.
11. See below 1.6.
12. This is the result of J. Rückert, “Verfassungen und Vertragsfreiheit”, in *Gesellschaftliche Freiheit und vertragliche Bindung in Rechtsgeschichte und Philosophie: Liberté sociale et lien contractuel dans l'histoire du droit et la philosophie*, ed. J.-F. Kervégan and H. Mohnhaupt (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1999), 165–196, 183, 186.
13. D. Klippel, “Persönliche Freiheit und Vertrag im deutschen Naturrecht des 18. und 19. Jahrhunderts”, in *Gesellschaftliche Freiheit und vertragliche*

- Bindung in Rechtsgeschichte und Philosophie: Liberté sociale et lien contractuel dans l'histoire du droit et la philosophie*, ed. J.-F. Kervégan and H. Mohnhaupt (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1999), 121–142; D. Klippel, “Der Lohnarbeitsvertrag in Naturrecht und Rechtsphilosophie des 18. und 19. Jahrhunderts”, in *Geschichtliche Rechtswissenschaft: Ars Trädendo Innovandoque Aequitatem Sectandi: Freundesgabe für Alfred Söllner zum 60. Geburtstag*, ed. G. Köbler, M. Heinze, and J. Schapp (Gießen: Brüderlischer Verlag, 1990), 161–184; D. Klippel, “‘Libertas commercium’ und ‘Vermögens-Gesellschaft’: Zur Geschichte ökonomischer Freiheitsrechte in Deutschland im 18. Jahrhundert”, in *Grund- und Freiheitsrechte im Wandel von Gesellschaft und Geschichte*, ed. G. Birtsch (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1981), 313–335.
14. J.-P. Lévy, “Le consensualisme et les contrats: Des origines au Code civil”, *Revue des sciences morales et politiques* 150, no. 2 (1995): 209–220.
  15. P.S. Atiyah, *The Rise and Fall of Freedom of Contract* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979).
  16. Cf. G.W.F. Hegel, *Naturrecht und Staatswissenschaft im Grundrisse: Grundlinien der Philosophie des Rechts*, 3 vols., ed. K. Grotsch and E. Weißer-Lohmann (Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 2009–2011) and Weber, *Gemeinschaften*.
  17. U. Oevermann, “Keynote Address: The Difference Between Community and Society and Its Consequences”, in *Developing Identities in Europe: Citizenship Education and Higher Education*, ed. A. Ross (London: CiCe, 2000), 37–61; M. Riedel, “Gesellschaft, Gemeinschaft”, in *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe: Historisches Lexikon zur politisch-sozialen Sprache in Deutschland*, ed. O. Brunner, W. Conze, and R. Koselleck (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1975), 2:801–862. Cf. E. Durkheim, *De la Division du travail social*, 8th ed. (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2012).
  18. Exemplary E. Gounot, *Le Principe de l'autonomie de la volonté en droit privé: Contribution à l'étude critique de l'individualisme juridique* (Paris: Arthur Rousseau, 1912).
  19. “Freedom of contract has been conclusively labelled a naive myth, but the forms of that mythology still bind.” B. Mensch, “Freedom of Contract as Ideology”, *Stanford Law Review* 33 (1981): 754.
  20. J. Rückert, “Zur Legitimation der Vertragsfreiheit im 19. Jahrhundert”, in *Naturrecht im 19. Jahrhundert: Kontinuität – Inhalt – Funktion – Wirkung*, ed. D. Klippel (Goldbach: Keip, 1997), 135–184; S. Hofer, *Freiheit ohne Grenzen? Privatrechtstheoretische Diskussionen im 19. Jahrhundert* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2001); A. Bürge, *Das französische Privatrecht im 19. Jahrhundert: Zwischen Tradition und Pandektenwissenschaft, Liberalismus und Etatismus* (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1991); Atiyah, *Rise and Fall*.
  21. A good example is the term *private autonomy* in French. It came up after Jules Barni had published his French translation of Kant’s *Metaphysische Anfangsgründe der Tugendlehre* in 1853 (I. Kant, *Éléments métaphysiques de la doctrine du droit (première partie de la Métaphysique des mœurs) suivis d'un essai philosophique sur la paix perpétuelle et d'autres petits écrits relatifs au droit naturel*, trans. J. Barni (Paris: A. Durand, 1853). Barni himself already identified Kant’s term *autonomy* with the ideas of the *Declaration of the Rights of Man and of Citizens* from 1789 and the *Code civil* in his introduction. Hence the economic and social ideas of the French Revolution were denominated in France by a Kantian notion in the sense of a mid-19th-century interpretation. This was possible because the reception of

- Kant was limited to some catchwords. This obscured Kant's philosophy of right as well as the true ideas of the Revolution, cf. Gounod, *Principe*, 54; Bürge, *Privatrecht*, 64–72; and V. Ranouil, *L'Autonomie de la volonté: Naissance et évolution d'un concept*, préface de Jean-Philippe Lévy (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1980). Against this revisionism argues H.J. Sonnenberger, "Verfassungsrechtliche libertés publiques und schuldrechtliche Vertragsfreiheit: Eine Skizze zur Abschlußfreiheit im französischen Recht", in *Festschrift für Hans Stoll zum 75. Geburtstag*, ed. G. Hohloch, R. Frank, and P. Schlechtriem (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2001), 385–404.
22. See e.g. X. Martin, *Nature humaine et Révolution française: Du siècle des Lumières au Code Napoléon* (Bouère: D.M. Morin, 1994). English: *Human Nature and the French Revolution: From the Enlightenment to the Napoleonic Code*, trans. P. Corcoran (New York, NY: Berghahn, 2001).
  23. "Une grande partie du droit privé de la Révolution est même constituée de projets ou de textes qui n'ont jamais été mis en vigueur." J.-L. Halpérin, "Le droit privé de la Révolution: Héritage législatif et héritage idéologique", *Annales historiques de la Révolution française*, no. 328 (2002): 135.
  24. C. Atias, "Révolution française et droit civil: une rupture?", in *État – révolutions – idéologies: Actes du colloque de Rennes (21, 22 Avril 1988)*, ed. Association Française des Historiens des Idées Politiques (Aix-en-Provence: Presses universitaires d'Aix-Marseille, 1989), 53–72.
  25. J. Hautebert and X. Martin, eds., *Retour sur un itinéraire: Du code Napoléon au siècle des lumières* (Bouère: D.M. Morin, 2010); X. Martin, *Mythologie du Code Napoléon: Aux soubassements de la France moderne* (Bouère: D.M. Morin, 2003); A. Bürge, "Le code civil et son évolution vers un droit imprégné d'individualisme libéral", *Revue trimestrielle de droit civil* (2000): 1–24.
  26. *Code civil des Français: Éd. originale et seule officielle* (Paris: Imprimerie de la République, An XII, 1804), 275; Cf. P.A. Fenet, ed., *Recueil complet des travaux préparatoires du Code Civil*, Vol. 13 (Paris: Videcoq, 1836).
  27. *Code civil*, 268.
  28. Ibid., 273 (art. 1124).
  29. Ibid., 269 (art. 1108).
  30. Ibid., 274 (art. 1133).
  31. Ibid., 275 (art. 1135).
  32. D. Berthiau, *Le Principe d'égalité et le droit civil des contrats*, préface de Jean-Louis Sourioux (Paris: L.G.D.J., 1999). Cf. about a previous project W. Schubert, "Naturrecht und gesellschaftliches Interesse (droit naturel und intérêt social) im Code de Convention (Projet de Code civil) von 1793", in *Naturrecht und Staat in der Neuzeit: Diethelm Klippel zum 70. Geburtstag*, ed. J. Eisfeld, et al. (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2013), 179–194.
  33. It should be noted nevertheless that the *Code civil* does not state in detail what equity and usage require. This is left to the juridical practice of the courts to decide. In other words, equity and usage are no longer absolute categories. Their meaning can vary; they are conceived as relative and dynamic categories.
  34. "Les particuliers ont la libre disposition des biens qui leur appartiennent, sous les modifications établies par la loi." Ibid., 133 (art. 537). "La propriété est le droit de jouir et de disposer des choses de la manière la plus absolue, pourvu qu'on n'en fasse pas un usage prohibé par les lois ou par les règlements." Ibid., 134 (art. 544). Cf. Schwab, "Eigentum"; and Botsch, "Propriété, Propriétaire."
  35. Ibid., 269–270 (art. 1108–1109). Lévy, "Consensualisme" stresses continuity, not change.

36. Weller, "Vertragstreue", 75; Mohnhaupt, "Vertragskonstruktion", 2–3; Wieacker, *Privatrechtsgeschichte*; F. Wieacker, "Die vertragliche Obligation bei den Klassikern des Vernunftrechts", in *Festschrift für Hans Welzel zum 70. Geburtstag*, ed. G. Stratenwerth, et al. (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1974), 7–22; Nanz, "Entstehung"; M. Dießelhorst, *Die Lehre des Hugo Grotius vom Versprechen* (Köln: Graz: Böhlau, 1959).
37. H. Grotius, *De iure belli ac pacis libri tres, in quibus ius naturae et gentium, item iuris publici praecipua explicantur*, editio nova cum annotatis auctoris (Amsterdam: Blaeu, 1663), Prolegomena [IV]. See also: "Deinde vero cum iuris naturæ sit stare pactis, (necessarius enim erat inter homines aliquis se obligandi modus, neque vero alias modus naturalis fingi potest,) ab hoc ipso fonte jura civilia fluxerunt." (Ibid., Prolegomena [III]).
38. Weller, "Vertragstreue", 75.
39. D. Klippel, ed., *Naturrecht und Staat: Politische Funktionen des europäischen Naturrechts (17.–19. Jahrhundert)* (Berlin: Akademie, 2006); D. Klippel, "Legal Reforms: Changing the Law in Germany in the Ancien Régime and in the Vormärz", in *Reform in Great Britain and Germany 1750–1850*, ed. T.C.W. Blanning and P. Wende (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 43–59; D. Klippel, "Die Philosophie der Gesetzgebung: Naturrecht und Rechtsphilosophie als Gesetzgebungswissenschaft im 18. und 19. Jahrhundert", in *Gesetz und Gesetzgebung im Europa der frühen Neuzeit*, ed. B. Dölemeyer and D. Klippel (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 1998), 225–247; D. Klippel, "Modernising the Law: Theories of Legislation in 18th and 19th Century Germany", in *Challenges to European Legal Scholarship: Anglo-German Legal Essays*, ed. G. Wilson and R. Rogowski (London: Blackstone, 1996), 171–183; H. Carl, "Naturrecht und Reichspublizistik in Reformdiskussionen der Spätphase des Heiligen Römischen Reiches", in *Das Naturrecht der Geselligkeit: Anthropologie, Recht und Politik im 18. Jahrhundert*, ed. V. Fiorillo and F. Grunert (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 2009), 159–182.
40. C. Thomasius, *Institutiones iurisprudentiae diviniae libri III, in quibus fundamenta iuris naturalis secundum hypotheses illustris Pufendorffii perspicue demonstrantur*, 7th ed. (Halle: Christoph Salfeld, 1730; repr., Aalen: Scientia, 1994). Cf. C. Thomasius, *Kurtzer Entwurf der Politischen Klugheit/ sich selbst und andern in allen Menschlichen Gesellschaften wohl zu rathen/ und zu einer gescheiden Conduite zu gelangen; Allen Menschen/ die sich klug zu seyn düncken/ oder die noch klug werden wollen/ zu höchst=nöthiger Bedürfnis und ungemeinem Nutzen/ aus dem Lateinischen des Herrn Thomasii übersetzt: Nebst einem ausführlichen Register* (Frankfurt am Main: Johann Großens Erben, 1710; repr., Hildesheim: Olms, 2002).
41. C. Wolff, *Grundsätze des Natur= und Völkerrechts, worinn alle Verbindlichkeiten und alle Rechte aus der Natur des Menschen in einem beständigen Zusammenhange hergeleitet werden* (Halle: Renger, 1754; repr., Hildesheim: Olms, 1980).
42. Klippel, "Freiheit", 121–122.
43. I. Kant, *Metaphysische Anfangsgründe der Rechtslehre* (Königsberg: Friedrich Nicolovius, 1797).
44. T. Nipperdey, *Deutsche Geschichte 1815–1866: Bürgerwelt und starker Staat*, 4th ed. (München: C.H. Beck, 1987), 34.
45. H. Grotius, *Le Droit de la guerre et de la paix: Nouvelle traduction par Jean Barbeyrac: Avec les notes de l'auteur même, qui n'avoient point encore paru en François & de nouvelles notes du traducteur*, 2 vols. (Amsterdam: De Coup, 1724); S. Pufendorf, *Le Droit de la nature et des gens, ou Système général des principes les plus importans de la morale, de la jurisprudence, et de la*

- politique: Traduit du Latin de feu Mr. le baron de Pufendorf par Jean Barbeyrac: Avec des notes du Traducteur, ou il supplée [sic], explique, défend & critique les pensées de l'Auteur: & une Préface qui sert d'introduction à tout l'Ouvrage*, 2 vols. (Amsterdam: Henri Schelte, 1706).
46. R.-J. Pothier, *Traité des obligations, selon les règles tant du droit de la conscience, que du droit extérieur*, 2 vols., 2nd ed. (Paris: Rouzeau-Montaut, 1764).
  47. P.B. Cheney, *Revolutionary Commerce: Globalization and the French Monarchy* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010); M. Sonenscher, *Before the Deluge: Public Debt, Inequality, and the Intellectual Origins of the French Revolution* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2007); P. Steiner, *La ‘science nouvelle’ de l'économie politique* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1998); C. Larrère, *L'invention de l'économie au XVIIIe siècle: Du droit naturel à la physiocratie* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1992); M. Albertone, *Moneta e politica in Francia: Dalla cassa di sconto agli assegnati (1776–1792)* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1992); H. Dippel, *Individuum und Gesellschaft: Soziales Denken zwischen Tradition und Revolution: Smith, Condorcet, Franklin* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1981).

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# 10 From Economic Reform to Political Revolution

## The Language of Dutch Patriotism

*Lina Weber*

### Introduction

Eighteenth-century Europe witnessed the emergence of a *new patriotism*, a practical commitment of contemporaries to reform their own societies. The distinguished Italian historian Franco Venturi has argued that the demand for selfless and disinterested devotion to the fatherland was primarily used by cosmopolitan political economists as an important means to revive the sense of liberty and equality that had prevailed in the ancient republics. This European patriotism of the Enlightenment stood, therefore, in stark contrast to early modern myths about national identity, which displayed an aggressive jealousy, and to nineteenth-century nationalisms, which were exclusive and bellicose.<sup>1</sup>

Subsequent research has taken up the idea of a new patriotism and refined its relation with the great reform ambitions harboured in the second half of the eighteenth century. As the main instrument to bring about a controlled change for the better, improving societies, which were established all over Europe, have received much scholarly attention. These reform institutions mirrored the evolution of the Enlightenment with its conviction that all aspects of political, civil, and economic life could be criticised, purposefully modified, and, at least in some cases, radically transformed. By publishing the demand for and result of systematic exploration of various fields of society, reform societies aimed at creating, distributing, and utilising knowledge and technologies that could be applied for improvement. Citizens could actively participate in this process and render themselves useful for the common good of their fatherland.<sup>2</sup>

Historians have demonstrated that one subcategory of these improving societies, which addressed agricultural, manufacturing, and commercial issues, gave rise to and accommodated the so-called economic patriotism.<sup>3</sup> In the Netherlands the first national reform movement to evolve was centred on the Economic Branch, established in 1778 at the Holland Society of Sciences in Haarlem. In contrast to the well-studied institutionalisation and the ideas of economic patriotism, very

little is known about the language used by its proponents. Arguing that Dutch supporters of economic reform created a new patriotism as a strategy to bring about the proposed reforms, this chapter has been organised the following way. It begins by outlining the context of economic discourse in the eighteenth-century Netherlands, and then goes on to introduce Dutch economic patriotism, its agents, and the media used. The main part of this chapter analyses the terms used by the economic patriots to describe their aspirations; followed by an analysis of the two key concepts of the movement, economy and patriotism. This approach to economic patriotism as a language of reform opens up possibilities to rethink its relation with the political patriot movement. Thus, the last chapter aims at showing how the economic patriots prepared the linguistic ground for political patriotism, which grew strong as a protest movement in the 1780s and ended in the Batavian Revolution. The conclusion brings together the different aspects of the article to accentuate the new insights on the link between reform and love of the fatherland that can be gained by considering Dutch economic patriotism as a language.

## Context

Throughout the whole eighteenth century, contemporaries perceived the Dutch economy as declining. A strong conviction that the former primacy in international trade was lost resulted in a proposal for a country-wide limited free-port (*Propositie tot Redres en Verbeeteringe van den Koophandel in de Republicq*, 1751). The authors, a collective of prominent merchants, claimed that this reform would bring back former glory by supporting and improving commerce.<sup>4</sup> As the limited free-port was not implemented the sense of living in a time of decline continued, and with it the search for means of redress. This perception of decay was not confined to the economy. To improve all aspects of civil society, the Enlightenment established various institutions from the 1760s onwards. One of these, institutions, the Holland Society of Sciences (*Hollandsche Maatschappij der Wetenschappen*), asked in a prize essay competition in 1771 for the foundation of Holland's trade, the reasons for its growth and decay, and the means to not only preserve its current state but also to improve and even perfect it.<sup>5</sup> This essay question and the winning answers show, as the *Proposition* of 1751, that the perception of economic decline was firmly established, that it was formulated in terms of *former glory* and *current decay*, and that economic prosperity was believed to rest solely on international trade. These texts attached vital importance to Holland's commerce and made its well-being the responsibility of Dutch civil society.<sup>6</sup>

## The Economic Patriots

The previously mentioned essay competition of the Holland Society of Sciences was won by Hendrik Herman van den Heuvel (1732–1785),

a clerk at the law court of Utrecht. In his contribution he called for the establishment of a special society, like the one in London, to serve as an organisational centre for wide-ranging economic reforms. As an answer, the Holland Society of Sciences founded a sub-society in 1778. The Economic Branch (*Oeconomische Tak*) had the stadholder as its patron and several branches throughout the Netherlands. Since the annual membership fee was quite high, it drew most of its members from the middling ranks and the mercantile regent class.<sup>7</sup>

Overall the economic patriots presented the current situation of the Republic as follows: They shared their predecessors' perception of economic decline. International competition had become so fierce that the Dutch Republic was now losing out. They explained this assumption with a change of the circumstances that had made Holland the leading commercial society in the seventeenth century. Foreign nations, above all Great Britain, had bettered their commercial activity by introducing protectionist laws and by improving agriculture and manufactures to supply inexpensive wares of high quality. At the same time, so Van den Heuvel and his supporters set out, the former Dutch virtues of industriousness und frugality had disappeared: Merchants turned into rentiers who live from their foreign investments and enjoy the pleasures of foreign luxury goods. Thereby they caused national unemployment, the decline of Dutch manufactures, and a prospering of the pernicious stock market. Consequently, so the economic patriots reasoned, inequality in the Dutch Republic had grown rapidly. They described this development as a *corroding cancer*<sup>8</sup> that would inevitably ruin the whole state if nothing changes. The reforms Van den Heuvel and his followers recommended aimed at something new that was radically different from all former economic reform proposals. They suggested to diversify the sources of Dutch prosperity by supplementing trade with manufacturing and agriculture, which had previously been considered as subordinate, and by creating a balanced economy.<sup>9</sup>

To achieve their aim, the economic patriots employed a two-fold strategy: On the one hand, the Economic Branch encouraged assembling knowledge to improve *all* branches of the economy. For example, it offered a prize medal to anyone producing earthenware that equals English pottery in quality and price.<sup>10</sup> On the other hand, economic patriotism aimed at moral reform. This was perceived as a precondition for the proposed balanced economy to succeed since manufacturers and farmers would become more industrious only if they were assured that there was a demand for their products. Therefore, the main object of Van den Heuvel's and his supporters' reform aspirations was the consumption behaviour of the Dutch. They demanded that all citizens render their expenses useful to the country by preferring, whenever possible, domestic above foreign goods. In almost the same manner, wealthy rentiers were called on to invest their money in Dutch manufactures rather than in foreign loans.

The attempt to reform Dutch morals was nothing new – and the economic patriots were well aware that former efforts had failed.<sup>11</sup> Thus, they employed a language focusing on economy and patriotism, two concepts that had been used only sporadically before, as a moral imperative for their fellow citizens to act in a way that rather aims at contributing to the common good than at satisfying self-interests. To distribute this language, economic patriotism drew foremost on the spectatorial periodicals *De Vaderlander* (1775–1778) and *De Borger* (1778–1780). This genre had been introduced to the Netherlands during the 1730s by Justus van Effen as an imitation of the Joseph Addison's and Richard Steele's *Spectator* in England. These periodicals appeared on a weekly basis, aimed at improving their readers' morals, and introduced a cultural dimension to the Dutch debate about the ideal citizen.<sup>12</sup> Additionally, the economic patriots published various speeches, plays, and images in the form of pamphlets to convince their audience of their moral reform program. For the improvement of knowledge and technical skills they primarily used the prize questions of the Economic Branch that were supplemented by the translation of foreign texts.<sup>13</sup>

## Reform?

It has been argued in previous sections that the proposal of a balanced economy was something radically new in the eighteenth-century Dutch Republic. However, as this section will show, the economic patriots presented themselves not as innovators but as restorers of a former and ideal order, a self-presentation that reveals much more than naivety due to a “lack of understanding in the true reasons of the economic decline”<sup>14</sup> or “a kind of longing for the simpler days, a past that never was”.<sup>15</sup>

When describing their aspirations, the economic patriots employed terms from the semantic fields of *restoring* (*herstellen*), *redressing* (*hervormen*), and *improving* (*verbeteren*). In the same manner, the terms *again* (*weer*) and *old* (*oud*) are used, together with the ideal of virtuous and industrious forefathers. A case in point is the poem *The Netherlands' Prosperity Restored* that Evert Jan Benjamin Schonck (1745–1821), a poet and headmaster of the Latin school in Gorinchem, published in 1778 to praise the Economic Branch. Schonck stated that if Van den Heuvel succeeded in redressing agriculture and manufacturing and if *old* fidelity replaced English and French luxurious fashions, the Republic will not only prosper *again*, but also *as much as formerly*.<sup>16</sup>

The same logic was inherent in the figurative language employed by the economic patriots to describe their actions. In his speech to the directors of the Holland Society of Science in 1777, Van den Heuvel exclaimed that *patriotic feelings* were asleep and urgently needed to be *woken up* if the Dutch did not want their commerce, arts, and manufactures to

be taken away by their neighbours' industriousness.<sup>17</sup> This analogy was extended in a treatise on commerce by *De Vaderlander*:

everyone, wake up the dead or dying love for the fatherland in his heart: everyone, refrain from giving to foreigners what can be employed to let his fellow citizen earn his bread: everyone, banish luxury as far as it is pernicious to us, and recall the old simple morals.<sup>18</sup>

This quote also indicates that the economic patriots were not against luxury in itself but tried to differentiate between a pernicious luxury of unnecessary foreign goods and a luxury of domestic goods beneficial to Dutch labourers.

Another frequently employed rhetorical figure to make their actions more comprehensible was that of healing a sickness. Van den Heuvel's endeavours are described as *extremely salutary*<sup>19</sup> against the *languishing sickness that emaciates and weakens*<sup>20</sup> society. These means for redress were given by the highest physician, God.<sup>21</sup> Both the image of waking up patriotic feelings and the one of healing the sick nation reveal the same underlying assumptions: There had been an ideal state of Dutch society, it had decayed, it could be recovered – with the help of a person or several persons. Thus someone had to become active to bring about a change for the better, and both analogies reveal an optimism in the improbability of the current situation. Employing their writings to make their fellow citizens aware of the perceived decline, the economic patriots presented themselves as actors striving for such a reversal. They underpinned their endeavour by models that aimed at encouraging and guiding this process of waking up and healing: an idealised past and foreign nations, especially Great Britain.

Van den Heuvel and his supporters glorified the Dutch forefathers with their industry and their love for the fatherland that brought about the *golden times* of concord and prosperity, which economic patriots situated in the late sixteenth and the seventeenth centuries when the Dutch had successfully gained their independence from Spain and started their global expansion.<sup>22</sup> Using the idealised recent past as a model, economic patriots employed a strategy to moral reform established in the spectatorial literature from the 1730s onwards. The Dutch Republic of the seventeenth century was used as an authoritative example of modern republican morals and manners by which citizens could render their behaviour useful to civil society.<sup>23</sup>

However, the idealised Dutch past did not suffice for Van den Heuvel and his supporters to convince their readership to change their behaviour. They also used contemporary successful competitors as points of comparison to justify the need for the proposed reforms. Thus, the main argument for establishing a reform society was that every other civilised

country had such a society to stimulate all branches of its economy.<sup>24</sup> The assumed local need was thus justified with universal activities. A passage from a treatise on the Economic Branch in *De Vaderlander* demonstrates how foreign nations, especially Great Britain, were used as a role model for the reforms the economic patriots argued for:

Why should we nourish less jealousy in our republic, and its inhabitants, than other people do in their countries; than especially the English and the Scots are used to doing? Do we have less close relations to the country of our birth and upbringing, less obligations to our fellow citizens, than they to theirs?<sup>25</sup>

In order to follow up their competitors' economic success, the Economic Branch tried to encourage economic progress with prize medals, and made foreign knowledge available in the Republic by translating texts on political economy, such as the works of Forbonnais, Campomanes, and Iselin. Overall, the quality of these translation was rather poor. Translators recognised their failure and explained it with the lack of an adequate Dutch vocabulary for the economy.<sup>26</sup> Nonetheless, they aroused great interest.<sup>27</sup> The economic patriots considered this knowledge utilisable for a process of emulation: They aimed not at simply copying the principles of their rivals' success but at creatively adapting them to specific Dutch circumstances. Their ambition was to avert ruin, at best to restore former prosperity, but never to surpass their international competitors.<sup>28</sup>

To convince their readers of the necessity and adequacy of the proposed moral and economic reforms, economic patriots used the term "seeing clearly". They stated that they aimed at *opening the eyes* of those that have not seen the true state of the common decline *in the right light* yet.<sup>29</sup> In economic patriotic self-presentation their claims needed no proof since they were based on the *unarguable truth* and were, therefore, self-evident. Anyone who disagreed with Van den Heuvel and his supporters was accused of being blind, of not looking properly, or of lacking reason.<sup>30</sup> Here again the assumption underlying the usage of the term seeing clearly is that economic patriotism did not invent anything new but that there was a right and original state of the world that was revealed to the audience.

The reason for economic patriots to present their reform proposals in terms of restoration and improvement rather than innovation was not a naïve longing for the simpler life of the past but a reaction to a conceptual problem. From their perspective any change in a free republic had to be moderate, slow, and take circumstances into account; force and violence were to be avoided by all means. They were convinced that "a good citizen never wishes to see the state's constitution altered"<sup>31</sup> and that it is a "common fault in republican governments that much time is needed until all wheels are set in motion"<sup>32</sup> since all people involved in the governing process had to be convinced of a new proposal. In

addition, innovation was considered synonymous with *projecting* and *scheming*, and thus related to gambling, foolishness, and fraud – so much so that innovative proposals were regarded as not being able to be implemented.<sup>33</sup> The economic patriot's self-presentation, however, did not help. Anonymous pamphlets mocking them described the proposed reforms as *new inventions* and *projects* and put them in one line with the Tulipmania and the 1720 Bubbles.<sup>34</sup>

## Economy and Patriotism

The term economic patriotism is, in the Dutch case, a category created by historians. But the *Van den Heuvels*, *brave Vaderlanders*, and *oeconomists* considered themselves as a group defined by the concepts of economy and patriotism – and were also recognised as such by their contemporaries.

Even though the term economy had been known before, it remained a marginal concept in public debate until this reform movement gave it unprecedented significance in the 1770s. In contrast to other languages, where economy gradually took on its modern political economic meaning during the late eighteenth century, the Dutch concept remained closely related to the Aristotelian science of the oikos, continued to emphasise the common good, and did not recognise the *economy* as a distinct entity with its own rules. The following text is a case in point. A collection of small tracts called *The Oeconomist. An Assemblage of Demonstrations, Discourses, Suggestions, and Essays, for the Prosperity of the Fatherland* started with a detailed explanation of the terms *oeconomist* and *economy*. The anonymous author justified introducing the new and not vernacular word *oeconomist* with his wish to relate to the Economic Branch. In contrast to *oeconomus* or *oeconomicus*, which were proper Latin words, he uses *oeconomist* to emphasise that the denoted person is not a theorist but someone who brought the art of managing a household into practice.<sup>35</sup> A second introduction to this collection presents *economy* as a female figure with the motto *moderation maintains*. She is verbally depicted with an olive wreath, a compass, a measuring rod, and a ship's wheel, and she represented peace, concord, and tranquillity.<sup>36</sup> Economy was defined as both a science and a duty to everyone; it encompassed the following:

a wise and lawful management of the house, regarded as the serviceable use of things, and in the gradually improving application of them; while warding off misuse; with a decent sparingness according to the precepts of frugality; avoiding any unnecessary waste; everything for the common utility of the whole family.<sup>37</sup>

As this quote indicates, the economic patriots were not against the possessing or accumulating of commodities in itself. They tried to find a

balance between austerity and prodigality while emphasising the importance of the right use of goods.<sup>38</sup>

In contrast to *oeconomist*, the terms fatherland and fatherlander (*vaderland*, *vaderlander*) as well as patriot and patriotism (*patriot*, *patriottisme*) were not neologisms. Until the 1760s, these concepts were only employed in times of crisis, when the inner or outer safety of the Republic was at stake. In the Dutch Enlightenment, fatherland became a key moral term, while patriot and patriotism gained a more political connotation.<sup>39</sup> Van den Heuvel and his supporters used these terms very frequently to justify their new and partly unpopular proposals. Calling on the fatherland allowed them to argue for ending the favouritism of international trade that had prevailed in the Dutch Republic for a long time. From their point of view only the cities and provinces near the seaside profited from it, while the countryside suffered from neglect and the imported goods.<sup>40</sup> Next to this unfairness within the Netherlands, commerce was presented to have pernicious effects since it enriched only particular merchants and impoverished the nation as a whole.<sup>41</sup>

With the concept of the fatherland, economic patriots had a means at hand to argue for the good of the Republic as a whole and to demand that fellow citizens, whether they be merchants, rentiers, or ordinary consumers, act in such a way as to further the common interest rather than their own. Even though they acknowledged self-interest as the mainspring that keeps the wheel of the world running, without any moral criticism, Van den Heuvel and his supporters tried to combine it with the duty of the citizen to sacrifice some of his personal benefits for the good of civil society. Assertions like “the first duty of a true lover of our fatherland is to prefer domestic manufactures over foreign ones even if they might not be of the same quality or price” were made over and over again.<sup>42</sup> In analogy to the individual Dutch citizen, the different cities and provinces were asked to subordinate their own interests to subordinate to the general good.<sup>43</sup>

For this kind of patriotism, too, the economic patriots used Great Britain as a model with which to contrast and criticise their fellow citizens and to argue for the improvement of manufactures:

The English manufactures have, it is true, a great advantage over those from Holland. They are not only promoted by the love of the whole country, but also by considerable rewards and are, therefore, better than ours. But what is thereby demonstrated! O, my countrymen, I dare not to say what is demonstrated by this! It demonstrates nothing else than that the English are better Patriots than we are.<sup>44</sup>

Although a certain hostility towards Britain prevailed and economic patriots demanded that Dutchmen should, whenever possible, prefer buying from or lending money to their fellow citizens, they did that within a

cosmopolitan framework for *love of mankind* and Christianity, that was not yet superimposed by a nationalistic ideology.<sup>45</sup>

In 1780, an etching was dedicated to the Economic Branch. It illustrates and brings together all the key terms constituting the language of economic patriotism.



Figure 10.1 *De Eerwaardige Nederlander Verdeelt zijn Schatten*, ca. 1780.

Rijksmuseum Amsterdam, RP-P-OB-85.071A, Cat. Nr. FMH 4370.

[Translation of the accompanying text] This scene presents a true Fatherlander, who hands out his treasures to the diligent labourer, husbandman, and artist, while he calmly resists the temptation to hand out his money against high interest to foreigners; this cannot stop awaking astonishment with them, which is looked at with great amazement by two men, who fit inlandish glasses the inlandish glasses, moreover one sees a hole band of deviated Hollanders, accompanied by Reason, hurrying to the Temple of Liberty, to employ their hands together with those who are already there to not only support it, but to bring it to its former glory, while Piety, Truth, Love, Loyalty, and Steadfastness stand ready to descend and settle down, in the foreground a lion presents itself which is almost completely erected, in front of which a lean Dog crawls away out of fear, while a cock jumps on his back, which calls to the Lion, to bring him further down with his Vigilance, and finally one sees in the background an amazing Fleet striving safely to the haven in the middle of the sea, which is led by Mercurius.

In the centre *a true Fatherlander* gives his money to industrious countrymen instead of lending it to foreigners, even though the latter promise him a higher return. On the left a man hands out glasses, a well-established motif to denote the means to overcome foolishness and see the truth.<sup>46</sup> The accompanying text describes them as *inlandish (inlandsch)*, though the box on the print calls them *oeconomic*. Obviously the two terms are closely related, but that does not make them synonymous.<sup>47</sup> On the right side of the picture Dutchmen follow reason to restore the tottering Temple of Liberty. This example shows how the language of economic patriotism was translated into a print that was accompanied by an explanatory text to persuade its audience to behave in a certain way.

This strong emphasis on the concepts of economy and patriotism was already recognised by contemporaries, especially by those criticising this reform movement. Anonymous pamphlets ridiculed the economic patriots by imitating and exaggerating their use of the terms in titles such as “Everyone his own Oeconomist. An Oeconomic Dream, Clarified by a Patriotic Telescope, in which can be Seen, that one can, without paying two Dukats a year and being a member of a Society, be a true Oeconomist, a diligent Housefather, and a well-meaning Patriot”.<sup>48</sup> This example also shows that critics noticed the use of the seeing analogy. In a similar manner other pamphlets were written in a *patriotic shop*, published in an *economic city*, printed by *Klaas and Justus Patriottius* or *true Patriots* in the second year after the establishment of the Economic Branch.<sup>49</sup>

## Political Implications

Even though scholars have considered the evolution of Dutch societies, such as the Economic Branch, as a crucial step in the process of popular emancipation that would eventually result in the Batavian Revolution, the economic patriots have mainly been treated as distinct from the political patriotism of the 1780s.<sup>50</sup> The latter movement started out as a protest against the stadholderate, the monarchical element in the Dutch Republic, but gradually widened its critique: The political patriots demanded a free press, a stronger involvement of the citizens in the political process, and organised civic militias. The issue of armed citizens revived the classical association of patriotism with military virtues.<sup>51</sup> The following section will analyse the political implications to be found in the writings of Van den Heuvel and his supporters, shedding new light on the relation between the economic and the later, more radical political patriots.

Economic patriots considered the Republic as a moral body in which the government as the head had to take care of the well-being of its inhabitants. Since the inhabitants constituted the various parts of the body, their happiness and prosperity made up the wealth and power of

the state. Hence, Van den Heuvel and his supporters asserted that it was the duty of every patriot to promote his fellow citizens by preferring Dutch products over their own taste and foreign goods.<sup>52</sup> They primarily aimed at strengthening the existing Republic as a whole and, therefore, considered any change in the established order as not desirable.<sup>53</sup>

Whereas this desired country of wealthy inhabitants was considered to be strong, a society of bankers and paper was perceived as the weakest of all people. This is what the economic patriots believed the Dutch Republic would become if nothing changed. Too-wealthy inhabitants who acted as financiers for foreign people were regarded to have no interest in their fatherland and to threaten the safety of the body politic. According to economic patriotism, rentiers would take their mobile assets and leave the country in case of an attack instead of defending it. At the same time, they rendered such an attack more likely as their richness made the Netherlands an attractive prey to foreign aggressors in need of money.<sup>54</sup> Next to this threat of losing sovereignty through an attack, Van den Heuvel and his supporters feared another and indirect dependency: “Participating strongly in foreign funds has to make the owners, and as a necessary consequence the Republic, inevitably too dependent on the nations that hold all their riches and prosperity in their hands.”<sup>55</sup> The nation implied here is Great Britain, where Dutchmen had invested great amounts of money.<sup>56</sup> The British Isles were thus not only considered as a model and rival to be imitated but also as an enemy and threat to the Republic. From the perspective of the economic patriots, several measures had to be taken to restore the stricken liberty of the Netherlands. The fragmentation between the different provinces needed to be mended so that both sea and land forces could be strengthened.<sup>57</sup> Similarly, the *only and lawful reprisal*<sup>58</sup> against rival neighbour countries was a strong and balanced economy so that *we need the English as little as possible*.<sup>59</sup> Here again economic patriots tried to find a balance between a perceived dependency through financial investments and complete autarchy, which was considered impossible given the limited resources of the country.

Within economic patriotism itself, there were critical voices claiming that the desired reforms did not go far enough. One of the tracts in the collection *De Oeconomist*, insisted that *the cancer sits too deep and is too common* to be healed.<sup>60</sup> According to the anonymous writer, the vices of luxury, pleasure, and gaming were too widely disseminated as to be healed by a few knowledgeable men in a reasonable amount of time.

This exploration of the political implications of economic patriotism suggests that the political patriot movement of the 1780s was a partly intended consequence of the economic patriot’s reform aspirations. Politicising the term *patriotism*, attempting to restore liberty, and criticising the financial sector, they laid part of the conceptual framework that political patriots would draw on. Though a new, radical, and innovative reform movement, political patriotism had started with arguing for a constitutional

restoration, which is not to be considered *ironic*<sup>61</sup> given the connotation of the term innovation at the time. Only in the mid-1780s did the political movement start to demand a new constitution based on universal enlightened principles, but the Dutch Republic needed the revolution of 1795 to adopt it.<sup>62</sup>

## Conclusion

This chapter has followed Venturi in analysing a *new patriotism* of the eighteenth century on its own terms, distinct from nationalism. In the case of the Dutch Republic, this cosmopolitan love for the fatherland was introduced and used by contemporaries aspiring reform. Since the Netherlands seemed to be losing out to international competitors, the Economic Branch of the Holland Society of Sciences in Haarlem was established in the 1770s to institutionalise endeavours to modify the economy. Members of this society combined love of the fatherland with the concept of economy as a rhetorical strategy to argue for the proposed changes. Even though the term economic patriotism is a retrospective category of historians, both the economic patriots themselves and their critics considered economy and patriotism as the group's defining principles.

The overarching goal of Dutch economic patriotism was to reverse the sharpness of the social divide and to increase the prosperity of the Republic, so that the independence of Netherlands could be preserved. To achieve this aim they tried to alter the Dutch economy intentionally and make it operate in a new and diversified way. However, this proposal of a balanced economy of agriculture, manufacturing, and commerce had to overcome the traditional preference given to international trade. Additionally, Van den Heuvel and his supporters considered a second reform necessary for this balanced economy to succeed: a change in the consumption behaviour, in the morals of their fellow citizens. Economic patriots translated foreign texts on political economy to make knowledge available for emulation, used their successful rivals as models for imitation, and combined notions of interest and duty<sup>63</sup> with the concepts of economy and patriotism in a language that they disseminated widely through pamphlets, spectatorial periodicals, and prints. Analysing the (rhetorical) images employed by members of the Economic Branch, this chapter has shown that the proposal of something new was presented as something old, as a restoration and redress – an image due to the contemporary connotations of innovation rather than economic patriots' naivety.

Instead of focusing on institutionalisation or theories, this chapter considered Dutch economic patriotism as a language and has explored how love for the fatherland could be used by contemporaries aspiring reform. They utilised it as a rhetorical strategy to provide their fellow citizens with guiding principles for a behaviour useful to the Republic as

a whole. While Van den Heuvel and his supporters attempted to bring about reforms within the established social and political order, they failed to have a considerable impact on the economy or to keep membership high. Yet they did have a significant impact as they lay part of the conceptual ground for the political patriotism that would lead to a profound revolution.

## Notes

1. F. Venturi, *Utopia and Reform in the Enlightenment* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971), 72; J. Robertson, “Franco Venturi’s Enlightenment”, *Past & Present* 137, (1992): 199–203.
2. The following examples use the term “patriot(ic) reform” to describe the second half of the eighteenth century: D. van Kley, “Religion and the Age of ‘Patriot’ Reform”, *The Journal of Modern History* 80, no. 2 (2008): 252–295; K. Stapelbroek and J. Marjanen, eds., *The Rise of Economic Societies in the Eighteenth Century: Patriotic Reform in Europe and North America* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012).
3. This term has been introduced by Schmidt to describe the societies in Zürich and Bern, see G. Schmidt, *Der Schweizer Bauer im Zeitalter des Frühkapitalismus* (Bern; Leipzig: Verlag Paul Haupt, 1932), 1:99–180. Kapossy has taken up this interpretation to demonstrate how economic patriotism allowed the Swiss republics to modernise their traditionally agrarian economies within their established polities as a means for self-preservation against monarchical challenges, B. Kapossy, “Introduction. The Economic Society of Berne and the Reform of the Republican Household”, *History of European Ideas* 33 (2007): 377–389.
4. “Door welke schikkingen en middelen, deselve [i.e. commercie] soude kunnen opgebeurt, bevordert, en indien het mooglijk was tot haar voorigen luister en aansien gebragt worden” (9); “de reformes in de Commercie” (30), *Propositię van Syne Hoogheid ter Vergaderingen van Haar Hoog Mogende en Haar Groot Mog. Gedaan, tot Redres en Verbeeteringe van de Koophandel in de Republicq* (Den Haag: Jacobus Scheltus, 1751). For the proposal, and the question of authorship in particular, see J. Hovy, *Het Voorstel van 1751 tot Instelling van een Beperkt Vrijhavenstelsel in de Republic (Propositie tot een Gelimiteerd Porto-Franco)* (Groningen: J.B. Wolters, 1966).
5. The question, together with the three winning answers, was published in the Society’s journal, *Verhandelingen, Uitgegeeven door de Hollandsche Maatschappye der Weetenschappen, te Haarlem* 16 (1775): 1–160.
6. Furthermore, these texts served as a frame of reference for economic discussions for the rest of the eighteenth century, cf. L. Leeb, *The Ideological Origins of the Batavian Revolution: History and Politics in the Dutch Republic 1747–1800* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1973), 108; I. Nijenhuis, “For the Sake of the Republic. The Dutch Translation of Forbonnais’ ‘Elémens du Commerce’”, *History of European Ideas* 40, no. 8 (2014): 1207.
7. The authoritative account of the institutional history can be found in J.A.B. de Haan, *Van Oeconomische Tak tot Nederlandsche Maatschappij voor Nijverheid en Handel, 1777–1952* (Haarlem: Tjeenk Willink, 1952).
8. Van den Heuvel used “deeze invreetende kanker” in his address to the Economic Branch in Utrecht in 1778 that was partly reprinted in I. Iselin, *Droomen van eenen Menschen-Vriend. Met Aanmerkingen Voorzien*, trans. H. Riemsnijder (Den Haag: Isaac van Cleef, 1780), 398.

9. E.H. Kossmann, *Politieke Theorie en Geschiedenis: Verspreide Opstellen en Voordrachten* (Amsterdam: Bert Bakker, 1987), 222.
10. *Programma van de Hollandsche Maatschappye der Weetenschappen; Opgericht te Haarlem; Behelzende een Plan ter Meerdere Bevorderinge van den Koophandel, Land- en Akkerbouw, Visscheryen enz. in ons Vaderland en de Volkplantingen van deezen Staat* (Haarlem: J. Bosch, 1777), 31.
11. See e.g. *De Vaderlander* (Amsterdam: Erven F. Houttuyn, 1776), 1:3; *De Vaderlander*, 2:32.
12. Velema convincingly argued for this political impetus of the genre against interpretations of it being apolitical, W.R.E. Velema, *Republicans: Essays on Eighteenth-Century Dutch Political Thought* (Leiden; Boston, MA: Brill, 2007), 77–91. In contrast, Koolhaas-Grosfeld classified the genre of spectators as only “culture-political” but not properly political and Buijnsters interpreted them as non-political, E. Koolhaas-Grosfeld, *De Ontdekking van de Nederlander in Boeken en Prenten Rond 1800* (Zutphen: Walburg Pers, 2010), 30; P. Buijnsters, *Spectatoriale Geschriften* (Utrecht: HES, 1991).
13. On translations as means to improve the economy of the Dutch Republic, see Nijenhuis, “For the Sake”.
14. “Dat men meende de kwalen van de zieke volkshuishouding te kunnen genezen met simple middelen sprout voort uit een gebrek aan inzicht in de werkelijke oorzaken van de economische achteruitgang. . . . Van een zekere mate van naïviteit was de Tak niet steeds vrij te pleiten;” J. de Vries, *De Economische Achteruitgang der Republiek in de Achttiende Eeuw*, 2nd ed. (Leiden: H.E. Stenfert Kroese N.V., 1968), 182–183.
15. Leeb, *Ideological Origins*, 109.
16. E.J.B. Schonck, *Neerlands Welvaart Hersteld, door den Œconomischen Tak. . .* (Gorinchem: F. van der Pyl, 1778).
17. “Patriottische gevoelens”, *Programma van de Hollandsche Maatschappye*, 42. A similar image of waking up patriotic feelings that have been asleep and not dead was employed by van den Heuvel as quoted in *De Vaderlander* 4 (1779): 313.
18. “elk wekke de gestorven of stervende liefde voor het Vaderland in zyn hart op: elk hoede zich aan den Vreemden te gheeven dat hy zyn eigen Burger kan laaten verdienen, om hem aan brood te helpen: elk verbanne de weelde on zoo verre die ons schaadelyk is, en herroepe de oude eenvoudige zeden”, *De Vaderlander* 1 (1776): 312. Similarly: “opwekken eener patriottische yver en voorkeur voor de inlandsche waren en fabrieken”, *De Borger* 2 (1779): 146.
19. P.R. Campomanes and H.H. van den Heuvel, “Review of ‘Verhandelingen over het Ondersteunen der Gemeene Industrie’”, *Vaderlandsche Letteroefeningen* 12 (1780): 445; Similar “zoo pryzelyke, heilzaame onderneeming”, *De Vaderlander* 4 (1779): 73.
20. “nu onze algemeene moeder aan eene kwynende ziekte jaar op jaar uitteert en verzwakt”, *De Vaderlander* 2 (1777): 85.
21. *De Vaderlander* 4 (1779): 59.
22. See for example *De Borger* 1 (1778): 25–32.
23. As has been demonstrated by Velema, *Republicans*, 77–91.
24. *Programma van de Hollandsche Maatschappye*, 6, 45.
25. “Waarom zouden wy minder nayver omtred ons gemeenebest, en deszelfs inwoonder voeden, dan andere volkeren omtend hunne landen; dan ‘Engelschen’ en ‘Schotten’ vooral gewoon zyn te doen? Hebben wy minder betrekking op het land onzer geboorte en opvoeding, minder verbintenis aan onze medeburgers, dan zy op de hunne?” *De Vaderlander* 4 (1779): 66.
26. H. Spruit and P. Haanebrink, “Opdragt aan den weledelen gestrengen Heere en Mr. Hendrik Herman van den Heuvel”, in *Het Begin, Opkomst*

- en Voortgang des Koophandels*, ed. F.V.D. de Forbonnais, trans. J.I. van Velthuysen (Utrecht: Hendrik Spruit and Pieter Haanebrink, 1771), 1: V.
27. Nijenhuis, “For the Sake”. For a more general interpretation of the relation between interpretations as a means of emulation and the emergence of eighteenth-century Europe, see S. Reinert, *Translating Empire: Emulation and the Origins of Political Economy* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011).
  28. H.H. van den Heuvel, “Verhandeling over de noodzakelijkhed van het ondersteunen der gemeene industrie . . .”, in *Verhandeling over het Ondersteunen van de Gemeene Industrie, in Spanje*, ed. P.R. Campomanes, trans. H.H. van den Heuvel (Utrecht: B. Wild, 1780), 5; *De Vaderlander* 1 (1778): 312.
  29. H.H. van den Heuvel, “Vorreeden aan den Lezer”, in *Pryzen door de Maatschappye ter Bevorderirng van Konsten, Handwerken en Koophandel. Te London Aangeboden. . .*, trans. P. Boddaert (Utrecht: J. van Schoonhoven, en Comp., 1776), IX.
  30. *Programma van de Hollandsche Maatschappye*, 44; *De Vaderlander*, 2:84; *De Borger*, 1:74; *De Borger*, 2:305; van den Heuvel’s address to the Economic Branch in Utrecht, as quoted in Iselin, *Droomen*, 392.
  31. “Een goed borger wenscht de gesteldheid van den staat niet veranderd te zien.” *De Borger* 1 (1778): 15.
  32. “Dan dit is een vry algemeen gebrek onder republicainsche Regeeringen, dat ‘er veel tyds verischt wordt, eer alle raderen aan den gang zyn.” *De Vaderlander* 2 (1777): 274.
  33. “plan- en projectmakers”, *De Vaderlander* 1 (1776): 331; see also the story of a “projector” in America, *Ibid.*, 153–160.
  34. J. Kraaijepoot, *Zendbrief van den Weléerwaarden en Discreeten Jogchen Kraaijepoot. . .* (Œconomische Stadt: Klaas en Justus Patriottius, 1779); J. Kikkersloot, *Zendbrief van den Eerzaamen Jonas Kikkersloot . . .* (Zwolle: S. Clement en Zoon [e.a.], 1779).
  35. [Foreword of the editor] in *De Oeconomist. Eene Byeenzaameling van Vertogen, Gesprekken, Voorslagen, en Proeven tot Welzyn van het Vaderland* (s.l.: s.e., s.a.), I-II. It is important to note that the term economist in Dutch did not denote a Physiocrat as it did in French or German.
  36. *De Oeconomist: Eene Byeenzaameling van Vertogen, Gesprekken, Voorslagen en Proeven tot Welzyn van het Vaderland* (s.l.: s.n., 1778), 1:14. The description of the female figure equals *Oeconomia* in the iconographic tradition following Cesare Ripa that was also available in Dutch adaptations.
  37. “een wys en wettig huisbestier, betracht in het dienstig gebruik der dingen, en in haar allengs verbeterde aanwending; onder weering van het misbruik; met een betaamelyke bezuiniging, naar het voorschrijft van Spaarzaamheid; vermydende alle noodelooze Verspillingen; alles tot gemeen nut van ‘t gantse Gezin.” *Oeconomist*, 1:15. Similarly, *De Borger* 2 (1779): 19. The German term *wirtschaftlich* is translated as both *oeconomisch* and *huishoudelyk* with a synonymous meaning, cf. the chapter titles in Iselin, *Droomen*.
  38. More explicit in *De Borger* 2 (1779): 106–117.
  39. G. de Bruin, “Het ‘begrip vaderland’ in de pamphletliteratuur ten tijde van de Republiek, 1600–1750”, in *Vaderland: Een Geschiedenis van de Vijftiende Eeuw tot 1940*, ed. N. van Sas (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 1999), 153.
  40. *De Vaderlander* 4 (1779): 84–87.
  41. Spruit and Haanebrink, “Opdragt”, II-III; *De Borger* 1 (1778): 178.
  42. van den Heuvel, “Verhandeling”, 80.
  43. *De Borger* 1 (1778): 289–294.

44. “De ENGELSCHE handwerken hebben, het is waar, een groot vorrecht boven de HOLLANDSCHE. Zy worden niet alleen aangekweekt door de liefde van de geheele natie, maar zelfs door aanmerkelyke belooningen en daarom zyn zy beter, dan de onze. Maar wat bewyst dit! ô myne landgenoten, ik durf haast niet zeggen, wat dir bewyst! het bewyst niets anders, dan dat de ENGELSCHEN beter PATRIOTTEN zyn dan wy.” *De Vaderlander* 2 (1777): 30.
45. See van den Heuvel’s address to the Economic Branch in Utrecht as quoted in Iselin, *Droomen*, 387–388; *De Borger* 1 (1778): 55; *De Borger* 2 (1779): 299–300. Nonetheless, the economic patriots have been considered as nationalist, e.g. J. de Vries, “De oeconomisch-patriottische beweging”, *De Nieuwe Stem* 7 (1952): 727; or, at least, as part of an evolving national consciousness that would lead to nationalism, H. Reitsma, “The United Provinces”, in *Nationalism in the Age of the French Revolution*, ed. O. Dann and J. Dinwiddie (London: Hambledon Press, 1988), 174–175; Koolhaas-Grosfeld, *Ontdekking van de Nederlander*, 33–41.
46. J. Salman, “Playing Games With the Financial Crisis of 1720: The April Card in ‘Het groote Tafereel der Dwaasheid’”, in *The Great Mirror of Folly: Finance, Culture, and the Crash of 1720*, ed. W. Goetzmann, C. Labio, and T. Young (London; New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2013), 245.
47. As Sturkenboom in her analysis of this print has claimed, D. Sturkenboom, “Merchants on the Defensive: National Self-Images in the Dutch Republic of the Late Eighteenth Century”, in *The Self-Perception of Early Modern Capitalists*, ed. M. Jacob and C. Secretan (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 109; D. Sturkenboom, “Amidst Unscrupulous Neighbours: Amsterdam Money and Foreign Interest in Dutch Patriotic Imagery”, in *Imagining Global Amsterdam: History, Culture, and Geography in a World City*, ed. M. de Waard (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2012), 56.
48. J. Work, *Elk-Zyn Eygen Oeconomist: Eene Huishoukundige Droom, Opgehelderd door Een’ Patriotsche Verrekijker, Waar in te Zien is, dat Men, Zonder Jaarlyks Twee Ducaaten te Geven, of Wel Lid eener Maatschappy en Societeit te Zyn, Echter een Waar Œconomist, en Zorgvuldig Huisvader, en een Welmeenende Patriot Kun Zyn* (s.l.: s.n., 1779).
49. J. Kraaiepoot, *Zendbrief van den Welëewaarden en Discreeten Jogchen Kraaiepoot*; J. Kikkersloot, *Zendbrief van den Eerzaamen Jonas Kikkersloot*.
50. Mijnhardt and Van Sas both argue for a close relation between enlightened societies and the revolution at the end of the eighteenth century, cf. W. Mijnhardt, *Tot Heil van ‘t Menschdom: Culture Genootschappen in Nederland, 1750–1815* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1988), 112; N. van Sas, *De Metamorphose van Nederland: Van Oude Orde naar Moderniteit, 1750–1900* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2004), 21–26. For the distinct treatment of economic and political patriotism, cf. de Vries, “Oeconomisch-patriottische beweging”, 726; de Vries, *Economische Achteruitgang*, 181; Leeb, *Ideological Origins*, 109; K. Stapelbroek, “The Haarlem 1771 Prize Essay on the Restoration of Dutch Trade and the Economic Branch of the Holland Society of Sciences”, in *The Rise of Economic Societies in the Eighteenth Century: Patriotic Reform in Europe and North America*, ed. K. Stapelbroek and J. Marjanen (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 259–260; L. Roberts, “Instruments of Science and Citizenship: Science Education for Dutch Orphans During the Late Eighteenth Century”, *Science and Education* 21, no. 2 (2012): 174.
51. See the description and image of “amor della patria” in Ripa’s *Iconologia*, where love of the fatherland is represented as a man in armour wearing weapons. This reference book had been available in Dutch as well through works

- such as C. Ripa, *Iconologia, of Uytbeelingen des Verstands.* . . . , trans. D.P. Pers (Amsterdam: D.P. Pers, 1644), 299–304. This association is also emphasised by Hont in his interpretation of the emergence of political economy in the eighteenth century, I. Hont, *Jealousy of Trade: International Competition and the Nation-State in Historical Perspective* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 2005), 114–115.
52. See for the republic as a “zedelijk lighaam” Heuvel, “Verhandeling over de noodzakelijkhed”, 36; *De Borger* 1 (1778): 285. For the mutual duty of the citizen and the government, see *De Vaderlander* 4 (1779): 59–67, 346; *De Borger* 2 (1779): 388–389. For happiness and prosperity of the people as the basis for the power of the republic, see van den Heuvel, “Verhandeling over de noodzakelijkhed”, 19; *De Borger* 1 (1778): 74. For the true fatherlander, see *De Vaderlander* 1 (1778): 3; *De Oeconomist*, 2–3.
  53. Even though van den Heuvel argued for educating poor children, he wanted to give them the knowledge they needed to be useful within their state. He explicitly rejected the idea to raise them to a higher social status since this would lead to a complete reversion of the Republic, which was not desirable, *De Borger*, 2:338.
  54. *De Borger* 1 (1778): 53, 60–64, 147.
  55. “Het sterk deelnemen in vreemde fondsen moet onvermeidelyk de eigeïars, en by een even noodwendig gevolg ‘t gemeenebest, te veel afhangelyk maeken van die Natien, die al hunnen rykdom en welzyn in handen hebben.” *De Borger* 1 (1778):52.
  56. *De Borger*, 1:140–143. For Dutch investments in Britain’s national debt, see C. Wilson, *Anglo-Dutch Commerce & Finance in the Eighteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1966).
  57. *De Borger* 1 (1778): 147–148.
  58. “de eenigste en eene geoorloofde schaverhaaling”, *De Vaderlander*, 4:76.
  59. “op dat wy de Engelsche zoo weinig noodig hebben als mogelyk is”, Ibid., 254.
  60. “de kanker zit te diep, en ze is te gemeen”, *De Oeconomist*, 99.
  61. N. van Sas, “De vaderlandse imperatief: Begripsverandering en politieke conjunctuur, 1763–1813”, in *Vaderland: Een Geschiedenis van de Vijftiende Eeuw tot 1940*, ed. N. van Sas (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 1999), 284.
  62. Velema, *Republicans*, 186–187.
  63. In contrast to other republican economic reform aspirations, they did not employ notions of honour. The most important exponent of Swiss economic patriotism was Hirzel’s description of Kleinjogg, a virtuous farmer in Zürich, which had been translated into Dutch (from the French translation) in the 1760s, H.C. Hirzel, *De Wysgeerige Landman of Jacob Gouyer: Een Landbouwer te Wermetschweil, naby Zurich, in de Bestiering zyner Landeryen en Huishouding, de Opvoeding zyner Kinderen, zyn Godsdienst en Zedelyk Karakter* (Deventer: Lucas Leemhorst, 1767).

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# 11 Mending the Boat While Sailing

## Languages of Linguistic Reform in the German Territories, c. 1750–1815

*Theo Jung*

### Introduction

Ever since Aristotle's notion of man as *zōion lógon échon* linked human nature to his linguistic ability, questions of language were at the centre of anthropological debates. At the beginning of the Early Modern period, the origin of language especially presented a key issue in discussions on natural law and the relation between nature and society. In the course of the eighteenth century the focus of these debates shifted. Alongside philosophical speculations about the nature and origin of language per se the comparison between various empirical languages across the globe and throughout history came to the fore. In the German context especially, this new emphasis would gain imposing material form at the end of the century, when it came to be systematised in works like Daniel Jenisch's *Philosophisch-kritische Vergleichung und Würdigung von vierzehn ältern und neuern Sprachen Europens*.<sup>1</sup> If this was already impressive, Jenisch's effort was soon surpassed by Johann Christoph Adelung's four volume *Mithridates*, which compared no less than 500 languages and dialects.<sup>2</sup>

At the root of this new wave of linguistic reflexion lay the belief not only that language was a condition of thought, but also that the specific properties of individual languages were imprinted in its speakers' way of thinking.<sup>3</sup> This premise opened a range of new questions, pointing either to comparisons between different languages (and their corresponding cultures) or to historical narratives linking the evolution of language to the progress of civilisation. As Johann Werner Meiner, a headmaster in Thuringian Langensalza, put it: "since language is a material image of our thoughts, one can always infer from the progressive perfection of the language to the preceding perfection of the way of thinking of a people".<sup>4</sup> From this it was just a small step to the converse conclusion that a reform of language could lead to improvements in all sorts of areas of life.

To be sure, attempts to improve languages themselves had a long tradition.<sup>5</sup> Rhetoric and literature had always involved questions of stylistic

perfection. To Renaissance scholars, ridding Latin of its medieval *barbarisms* had been an integral part of their mission to recover the classical and biblical sources of Western civilisation. Since the *querelle des anciens et des modernes*, debates about the relative merit of Latin and the various vernacular languages had resulted in attempts to standardise and improve the latter. These traditions remained influential in the German territories well into the eighteenth century and beyond. Still, from the second half of the century on, the increasing weight of the comparative historical perspective provided debates on the possibility and necessity of linguistic reform with new impulses.

## Intellectual and Institutional Contexts

The remarkable resonance of these debates in the public sphere owed much to a general interest in the clarity and uniformity of sign systems, tying in with scientific and philosophic debates as well as with the practical concerns of expanding state bureaucracies and the supra-regional literary world. No less important was that the issue of linguistic reform found a number of new institutional spaces offering platforms of exchange to language experts scattered across the German territories. The basis for this had already been laid in the seventeenth century with the emergence of societies for the cultivation of the German language like the *Pegnesische Blumenorden* in Nuremberg, the *Elbschwanenorden* in Hamburg, and the Weimar *Fruchtbringende Gesellschaft*. If their membership remained limited and most proved short-lived, they gained some influence through their strong networks into high society and politics.<sup>6</sup> Above all they provided crucial impulses to a second wave of institutionalisation of linguistic reform during the following century. Leibniz's "Ermahnung an die Deutsche, ihren Verstand und Sprache besser zu üben samt beigefügten Vorschlag einer Deutschgesinten Gesellschaft" was especially influential in this regard,<sup>7</sup> pleading for an emulation of the French *Académie* and its dictionary. This text provided the programmatic basis of the reconstitution of the Leipzig Deutsche Gesellschaft in 1727, heralding in the establishment of a network of more than thirty linguistic societies across the German-speaking lands, from Königsberg to Bern and from Kiel to Vienna, during the second third of the eighteenth century.<sup>8</sup>

Measured by their own standards, the impact of the programmes of linguistic reform articulated in these societies may have been meagre. Indeed it is doubtful if they had any effect on the language use of ordinary Germans at all. What they managed to do, however, is put the issue of language reform on the agenda of public debate. Compared to their baroque counterparts, the eighteenth-century language societies had a much more inclusive membership, ranging from the high nobility through the literary and academic elites down to the literate public of civil servants and professionals.<sup>9</sup> Through intensive publishing activities

their pleas for the necessity of language improvement as an essential component of any real social and political reform reached a wide audience.

A case in point is the *Deutsche Gesellschaft zu Göttingen* founded in 1738 and closely linked to the university established only a few years before.<sup>10</sup> In 1755 it had 282 honorary and 206 regular members (mostly students). Its weekly gatherings were attended by many more. Besides establishing a lending library, members regularly held speeches on ceremonial occasions. Most importantly, their meetings provided a platform for an abundance of publications in and on the German language. Other societies even founded their own journals, like the Leipzig *Beiträge zur critischen Historie der deutschen Sprache, Poesie und Beredsamkeit*. Especially from the 1770s and 80s onwards, the number of specialised journals grew considerably, widening the platform for linguistic discussion.

No less important than the *Deutsche Gesellschaften* in putting the issue of language reform on contemporaries' minds were the academies. Although these were concerned with a wide range of topics, language played an important part in their activities. The annual prize competitions organised by the Prussian Academy of Sciences, for instance, were of special importance as catalysts of linguistic debate. During the second half of the century many of these were focused on linguistic topics like the reciprocal influence of language and thought (1759), the origin of language (1770), the legitimacy of the position of French as a European *lingua franca* (1784), or the possibility and desirability of a purification of the German language (1793).<sup>11</sup> Focusing the attention of scholars from across the German lands and at times engendering long-running controversies, such questions provided strong impulses to debates on linguistic reform.

## One Language to Reform, Many Languages of Reform

If linguistic reform became a topic of ardent debate during the second half of the eighteenth century, it would in some respects be more accurate to speak of multiple concurrent debates taking place at the same time, the reason being that this period saw the differentiation of two very distinct approaches to this topic. Although both were predicated upon the same comparative and historical viewpoint and (in principle) had a common subject matter, their perspectives on it were fundamentally different. If they were speaking about the same thing at all, it was almost as if they spoke different languages. Speaking of *languages of linguistic reform* in this way may appear at first as mere wordplay. Yet taking our cue from the Cambridge School of intellectual history, we may give the expression a precise terminological meaning, opening a fruitful new perspective on our subject matter.

Generally, a political language may be understood as a specific mode of addressing a particular range of themes and problems.<sup>12</sup> In the words of John Pocock, it is a “linguistic device for selecting certain information, composed of facts and the normative consequences which these facts are supposed to entail”.<sup>13</sup> As such, these languages do not just shed a specific light on a pre-existing object – highlighting certain issues and options while diverting attention from others. They play a formative role in the construction of the very objects they address. Pocock’s definition of the language-concept stresses its open, multifaceted nature:

a complex structure comprising a vocabulary; a grammar; a rhetoric; and a set of usages, assumptions, and implications existing together in time and employable by a specific community of language-users for purposes political interested in and extending sometimes as far as the articulation of a worldview or ideology.<sup>14</sup>

Compared to other common analytical concepts in this field like *language attitude*, *language ideology*, or *language consciousness*, addressing the subject of linguistic reform in the late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century German territories in terms of political languages has multiple advantages.<sup>15</sup> Firstly, it steers clear of claims about the worldview or mentality of individuals or groups, remaining in the domain of observable linguistic behaviour. Secondly, it refrains from ascribing a singular position or doctrine to any group or individual, allowing for varying and even contradicting points of view within the language as well as the mixing of multiple languages in particular texts and contexts. Thirdly, it shifts the focus from the technicalities of any author’s theoretical claims to the linguistic markers and operations structuring his or her text, pointing to the horizon of understanding carrying its arguments. Finally, the concept of political languages points to a new understanding of the way in which debates about an apparently non-political topic may nonetheless be said to be political in less obvious ways. For all these reasons the following contribution will sketch two such languages. It will show how they pre-construed their subject in ways flexible enough to allow for various and even contrasting positions while at the same time providing a distinct perspective, privileging certain issues and questions while rendering others all but meaningless. In this way, two competing approaches of speaking about language in the late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century German territories emerge, presenting fundamentally different vistas on the German language’s current state, the possibilities of its future reform, and their political and social implications.<sup>16</sup>

## The Language of Linguistic Enlightenment

Starting in the middle of the eighteenth century, German debates about language and its reform came to be dominated by an approach that

contemporaries identified as belonging to the broader intellectual current of *enlightened* thought. Linguistic debates had been closely tied to questions of epistemology already from the seventeenth century onwards. In time this engendered a view of language that approached its object primarily as an instrument and register of knowledge. A poignant example of this is a text written by the Swiss philosopher and mathematician Johann Georg Sulzer in response to a prize question posed by the Academy of Sciences in Berlin in 1759. From a philosophical viewpoint the essay, titled “Observations on the Reciprocal Influence of Reason on Language and Language on Reason”,<sup>17</sup> was not particularly original. Yet exactly for this reason it points to some of the linguistic patterns current in contemporary discourse on language.

One of these patterns was the aforementioned narrative of a parallel evolution of language and civilisation that had become a commonplace. Yet crucially, the language of linguistic enlightenment presented a very distinct image of the way in which this parallel was to be understood. Explaining that words are the signifying expressions of ideas or concepts, Sulzer argued that “the number of words in a language, combined with the number of their derived meanings, is the sum of all clear ideas which the nation that speaks this language possesses”.<sup>18</sup> Thus, he added, any increase in the number of concepts provides a reliable indicator of the progress of rationality. Speaking in terms of *enriching the inventory* of knowledge by improving the *richness of language*, Sulzer envisioned a parallel progress of knowledge on the one hand and the words that signified it on the other.<sup>19</sup>

Sulzer’s essay itself revealed the strong suggestive power of this perspective. Considering the function of words for thought, he stressed that besides abbreviating the operations of the mind and stimulating inventiveness, “names secure the possession of clear ideas”.<sup>20</sup> As a result he put his focus on the number of clear concepts and their functionality as signifiers.<sup>21</sup> As the author frankly admitted, this tended to reduce the language to its referential function, approaching it as a mere wordlist<sup>22</sup> and neglecting many other of its aspects and functions. Still, this hesitation did not lead him to break with his approach or to systematically consider other parts of the linguistic phenomenon.

The use of the vocabulary of accumulation, riches, and progress with reference to the language-thought nexus had been previously popularised in French Enlightenment thought. Building on Locke’s principle that words represent ideas, the *encyclopedistes* had correlated the lexicon of particular languages to the information content present in a given society: “A people’s language gives its vocabulary, and the vocabulary is a fairly trustworthy register of all knowledge of this people: just by comparing the vocabulary of a nation in different times, one may form an idea of its progress.”<sup>23</sup> Built around metaphors of acquisition, storage, and expansion, this approach suggested a perspective that presented linguistic evolution in terms of a gradual improvement of clarity of reference as indicated by the number of clear and distinct concepts.

From a comparative perspective, languages were accordingly measured to the standard of their relative *wealth* or *poverty*.<sup>24</sup> Carl Friedrich Flögel, a teacher in the Lower Silesian town of Liegnitz (today Legnica) was the author of a popular *Geschichte des menschlichen Verstandes*, published in three editions between 1765 and 1776. Like Sulzer, Flögel approached language primarily as an instrument of reason, explaining that “a rich language opens up a spacious field for it. It learns a great many words, and with them a great many concepts”.<sup>25</sup> Poor languages like those of the Native Americans, on the other hand, necessarily produced narrow-minded thinking. Thus the question of wealth and poverty was primarily understood in quantitative terms, as the “amount of words and expressions prevalent in a language”.<sup>26</sup> Yet Flögel’s discussion of the Chinese language also showed that some took a more complex view. Although the Chinese had plenty of words, their lack of *general* (i.e. abstract) expressions prevented them from making advances beyond their current “*language of confusion*”.<sup>27</sup> Pointing to Leibniz and Christian Wolff as exemplary authorities who had advanced scientific progress by providing clear definitions, Flögel called on his compatriots to continue on the same path, coining new expressions as well as eliminating vague or ambiguous ones.<sup>28</sup>

This duty to reform – or, as contemporaries put it, to cultivate, refine, improve, or even perfect – the language was the central focus of the language of linguistic enlightenment.<sup>29</sup> Sulzer saw it as his main goal to encourage the coinage of neologisms and neosemantisms, arguing that “he who invents a new term, or uses a previously known word in a different sense, has enriched the stock of our knowledge by a new idea”.<sup>30</sup> Others focused on the corresponding negative task of ridding the language of any “inconvenient, murky, ambiguous and linguistically malformed”<sup>31</sup> expressions. Combined, these tasks were taken as the essential first step in any project of social and cultural improvement, leading Christoph Lichtenberg to conclude that in the end, “our whole philosophy is rectification of language use”.<sup>32</sup>

## Social and Political Implications

Like any political language, the language of linguistic enlightenment was used in a number of contexts and for diverse purposes. At times – such as in the context of the language societies – it was at the basis of elaborate projects of language improvement. However, more often it played a much less conspicuous role in arguments on other matters. Innumerable texts started with the observation that *hitherto* debates on the particular subject at hand had been hindered by confused or contradictory definitions of key terms. Claiming that ostensible differences of interest or opinion had ultimately been only semantic and could be solved by providing the correct definitions, the author then proceeded to provide

these by presenting his own position as the conclusions logically following from this self-evident premise. If such pleas for conceptual clarity seem reasonable enough, the objective lucidity they purported to aspire to was often intimately connected with particular normative arguments. As exemplified by the famous debate over the concept of Enlightenment in the *Berlinische Monatsschrift*, such controversies about definitions couched in the language of linguistic enlightenment were never *just* about the meaning of words.

Equivalent arguments were present in debates about more obviously political concepts such as state, people, freedom, republic, tyranny, or nobility as well.<sup>33</sup> In such contexts, the language of linguistic enlightenment served two functions. Firstly, presenting the issue in terms of conceptual differences took some of the sting out of potentially highly charged controversies. Under the existing censorship regimes, couching arguments in a philosophic language made it possible to put forward claims about themes that would have been off limits in terms of straightforward political discourse. Secondly, presenting political issues in conceptual terms drew them into the jurisdiction of language professionals, bringing their specific expertise to bear on themes that – in their objective socio-political capacity as teachers, authors, publishers, professors, and the like – remained well beyond their official competency. Thus the language of linguistic enlightenment also served to confer social and political authority on what might in a wide sense be termed *intellectuals*.<sup>34</sup>

At the same time, even the most *abstract* projects of language reform carried implicit and explicit social and political implications. Authors of linguistic treatises underscored the importance of their subject by pointing to the crucial role of language in all areas of life. “The *use* of language is immeasurable”, wrote Johann Jakob Hemmer, a chaplain at the Mannheim court.

It is the image of what goes on in the innermost part of our souls; it is a key to the arts and sciences, a vessel of all wisdom and truth, the strongest bond of human society, an inexhaustible source of comfort, of delectation and happiness. . . . As much as a people values its welfare, so keenly should it strive to bring its language to the highest grade of perfection.<sup>35</sup>

Besides its role as a precondition of progress in the arts and sciences, linguistic reform was linked to the cultivation of manners, taste, and morals.<sup>36</sup> Even the Prussian king Frederick II himself, whose critique of the German language had provoked controversial debate, saw linguistic reform as the first step on the way to the eradication of the “weeds of barbarism on our soil”.<sup>37</sup> Claiming that a people’s morality was correlated to the precision of its vocabulary, reformers strove to raise the former by improving the latter.<sup>38</sup>

In the German context, efforts to standardise a single High German variety tied in with concurrent criticisms of the Empire's provincialism. The objective to facilitate and improve communication across states' borders was thus connected to an elite patriotism that looked beyond the narrow confines of the individual territories. As we will discuss in more detail later, the valorisation of the German vernacular (first against Latin, later against French) could itself be understood as a patriotic gesture, proving to foreigners "that the nation does not lag behind in culture".<sup>39</sup> This in turn had both regional and social connotations. When Adelung chose the dialect of Upper Saxony as the basis for his codification of the High German standard on the grounds that this region was the most cultivated, experts from other German-speaking lands unsurprisingly disagreed.<sup>40</sup> Especially Swabian linguists and authors took issue with the particularly strong influence of French in the Upper Saxon region, calling the local dialect *French Saxon German* and its centre Leipzig *little Paris*.<sup>41</sup> In such controversies political and cultural competition between the various German regions and states was constantly present. At the same time, in view of the importance of the French language at the courts and in elite society, the cultivation of the German vernacular had an implicit social bias, positing the Frenchified elite against the simple German speaker. Popular satires on the gallophile *Germanofrenchman* (*Deutschfranzose*) therefore combined a patriotic with an anti-aristocratic penchant.<sup>42</sup>

Although such implications would have been obvious to contemporaries, in most cases they remained just that: implicit. The political climate pushed authors toward cautious formulations, as becomes apparent in a text by the Göttingen historian August Ludwig Schlözer about terminological variety in the political sciences (*Staatswissenschaft*). The author stressed the special importance of conceptual clarity in this field. Whereas in other contexts conceptual questions might be insignificant, in politics things could get serious very quickly as any unusual usage of a political term could draw the attention of the "inquisitors, censors, and accountants", who were all too swift in drawing their respective "hunting knives". Yet already in the next sentence Schlözer tempered his tone. The only option available to the *private person*, he explained, was to make a note of the particular concepts prevalent (or "ordained by higher authority") in every single state and "for his own security" keep a "register of geographic-political varieties".<sup>43</sup> Such phrases pointed to the red line without crossing it.

After the French Revolution the social and political implications of the language of enlightened linguistic reform came more strongly to the fore. In France itself philosophical debates about the clarity of terminology had triggered discussions on the abuse of words that in time became decidedly political.<sup>44</sup> During the Revolution programmes of linguistic reform were part and parcel of the efforts to eliminate the Ancien Régime.<sup>45</sup>

Claiming that conceptual confusion was a breeding ground for despotism, the revolutionaries set out to create a new political vocabulary that would bring the people to an understanding of their natural rights and the common good. Reactions to these efforts in the German lands were of course anything but uniform. Yet in sum they led to a more explicit politicisation of the language of linguistic enlightenment.

Counter-revolutionary authors strove to preclude the encroachment of the linguistic aberrations of the revolutionary language onto German soil. The anonymous author of a dictionary of French revolutionary vocabulary (1799) viewed the Revolution as an essentially linguistic event. “Since time immemorial words and nothing but words have armed peoples against each other; words have destroyed and built empires; words have drowned the world with tears and blood.” In the Revolution a horde of “pseudophilosophers” (*Afterphilosophen*) had invented the “magic words” *freedom* and *equality* and after at first quietly murmuring them among themselves had gradually moved to shouting them on public squares, “so loudly that they resound in all parts of Europe; and millions of people lose their lives and property by these empty word-sounds”.<sup>46</sup>

On the other side of the political spectrum authors like Joachim Heinrich Campe took inspiration from French developments for their own linguistic work. On a visit to Paris in 1789 Campe had been astonished to see simple workers in animated debate about the rights of man.<sup>47</sup> In Germany, he believed, such a thing would have been impossible – if only because the German language lacked the necessary vocabulary with regard to issues of science, religion, and politics. Starting from the familiar premise that a people’s dictionary set the limits of its “spiritual extension and building of character”,<sup>48</sup> he set to work on a decade-long project to enrich the German language that would culminate in his *Wörterbuch zur Erklärung und Verdeutschung der unserer Sprache aufgedrungenen fremden Ausdrücke*.<sup>49</sup>

## The Language of Linguistic Identity

Although the language of linguistic enlightenment achieved a marked dominance in linguistic debates in the second half of the eighteenth century, this was never absolute. To those taking an aesthetic point of view, its technical instrumentalism could appear lifeless and tasteless. In an epigram on Adelung titled “The Linguist” published in their *Xenien*, Goethe and Schiller wrote, “You may anatomise the language,/but only its cadaver,/spirit and life slips away fleetingly/from the blunt scalpel.”<sup>50</sup> In this manner, alternative *languages* defended their view of their subject from the perceived onslaught of enlightened reformism. At the same time, a second language of linguistic reform was emerging that – although in many ways predicated on the same basis – presented its subject in a very different light. One influential example of this is to be found in the

work of Johann Gottfried Herder. His earlier publications had been rooted in the metaphor of acquisition and amelioration typical for the language of linguistic enlightenment. In his fragments *Ueber die neuere Deutsche Litteratur* (1767) he compared language to a “storehouse” of thoughts turned into signs and a “national treasury”. He coined his arguments in a vocabulary reminiscent of finance and book-keeping.<sup>51</sup> In his *Metakritik zur Kritik der reinen Vernunft* (1799) he referred to Sulzer’s essay, agreeing with him that most misunderstandings and contradictions in thinking were attributable to deficiencies in the “tool of language”.<sup>52</sup>

If such metaphors indicated a position squarely within the language of linguistic enlightenment, others showed that Herder’s view was in fact more complex.<sup>53</sup> Already in his early work he had mixed in other metaphors pointing to a different perspective. Although in a section of the fragments on idioms (*Idiotismen*) he continued to call the language a “national treasure”, he now couched this metaphor in a very different semantic field. A language’s idiosyncrasies, he wrote, are its “*patronymic* beauties . . . that no neighbour can steal by translation, and that are holy to the patron goddess of the language: beauties, woven into the genius of the language, which are destroyed if they are severed out”.<sup>54</sup> Traditionally, idiomatic expressions had been defined as the untranslatable parts of a language.<sup>55</sup> Herder turned this negative definition around, interpreting the language’s idiosyncrasies as those elements in which its character was most vividly expressed. These were the markers of its essence or, as contemporaries put it, its spirit.

The talk of a spirit (*Genie* or *Geist*) of the language originated in the terminology of aesthetics (*genius linguae*), where it signified a stylistic guideline for authors and translators. Grammarians saw it as their task to pin down the language’s spirit by analysing it in terms of formal features like syntax or semantics.<sup>56</sup> Central to such considerations was the notion of an intimate bond between the spirit of the language and that of the people speaking it.<sup>57</sup> This implied a very different understanding of language than the one evoked by the metaphors of acquisition and progress prevalent in the language of linguistic enlightenment. Although presupposing an equally close link between language and culture, this perspective was focused not on their parallel advancement but on the inseparable conjunction of their unique characters.<sup>58</sup>

The differences between the two perspectives became especially apparent in debates over the status of idiomatic expressions. From an epistemological point of view idiosyncrasies had been interpreted as stumbling blocks on the road to perfect and universal clarity.<sup>59</sup> Sulzer had viewed the issue in this way and had looked for ways to eliminate them from the language.<sup>60</sup> Pointing to their merits, as Herder and others started to do from the 1760s onwards, meant taking a different view.<sup>61</sup> Even more so because Herder did not understand these linguistic particularities as

indifferent decoration either. In his eyes their value lay in their distinctiveness to a language and a people. For this reason the (in a strict, terminological sense) *idiotic* authors that made use of their mother tongue in an untranslatable manner were not to be criticised, as had been commonly the case. Rather, they should be revered as “national authors in a high sense”.<sup>62</sup> The beauty of their writings stemmed directly from their intimate entanglement with the spirits of their language and nation. Even if they had no obvious *purpose* of any kind, he concluded, idioms enabled the “wise man of language” (*Sprachweise*) to “recognise the spirit of his language, to hold it together with the spirit of the nation, and to explain both with reference to each other”.<sup>63</sup> Especially from the 1780s onwards a wave of popular interest in the idiomatic words and expressions of various regions became evident in the publication of numerous collections of provincial idioms (*Idiotika*), revealing a mix of ethnolinguistic interests and local patriotism.<sup>64</sup>

The language of linguistic identity opened up new vistas on the comparison of different languages as well as on their development. While earlier debates had focused on which language was closest to the language of Eden, the language of linguistic enlightenment had compared languages with reference to a universal standard – first and foremost the richness and clarity of their vocabularies. The language of linguistic identity turned this argument on its head. From the view that languages were the singular expressions of a people’s spirit followed the somewhat paradoxical conclusion that if they could be meaningfully compared at all, then only based on how *true* each language remained to itself and the spirit of its nation. This consideration led back to the historical perspective. Rather than perceiving the development of languages in terms of their gradual perfection, the criterion of self-sameness tended to present any change as a deviation from an authoritative (if often vaguely defined) point of origin. Two historical narratives particularly came to the fore in this debate. The narrative of civilisation that had already been central to the language of linguistic enlightenment was cast in a new, bleaker light. Taking the histories of Greece, Rome, and France as cautionary examples, it was shown how the progress of linguistic refinement could ultimately lead to an “over-finishing of the language”<sup>65</sup> (*Sprachüberfeinerung*), draining it of originality, immediacy, and energy. In this view the communicative pressures of modern polite society put a premium on innovation over simplicity, convention over originality, and form over content, while the progress of enlightenment sapped the language of energy.<sup>66</sup> Such considerations placed linguistic developments in the widest possible context, interpreting them as signs of the times pointing toward the decline of the culture as a whole. In consequence, this holistic diagnosis provided a fertile basis for cultural critique but no obvious clues on how to bring about a reversal by way of linguistic reform.

In this respect it differed starkly from a second narrative gaining popularity in the last decades of the eighteenth century. In its account,

the purity of the German language was slowly being contaminated by foreign influences, resulting in the task of making the language more like itself by ridding it of alien intrusions. As we have seen, already the earliest projects to improve the German vernacular had reacted to the perceived dominance of other languages. On this basis the seventeenth century saw a first wave of purist reform efforts. Since that time purism retained a constant presence in linguistic debates, reaching up to Campe's dictionary and beyond. Still, this apparent stability concealed some significant discontinuities with regard to its motivation as well as to the languages in which its goals and methods were cast.<sup>67</sup> The purism cultivated in the baroque language societies had mainly had a literary focus, reacting against the aberrations of the *Alamode*-style as well as against the dialectical pluralism of the German language(s). Although Enlightenment authors like Gottsched or Adelung frowned at affected, unreasonable, and unnecessary borrowings from foreign languages, their primary concern was the elimination of neologisms, regionalisms, and archaisms from the High German standard. Campe's programme of Germanification was motivated by a democratic agenda of popular pedagogy, his goal being to aid the enlightenment of the common people by providing them with intuitively clear concepts in their own language rather than the French or Latinate expressions understandable only to educated elites.<sup>68</sup>

Recast in the language of linguistic identity similar efforts gained a much more emphatic tone. If the mother tongue was the natural expression of the spirit of a nation, the intrusion of foreign elements was a step on the way to its spiritual subjugation. In this vein Klopstock warned his compatriots in 1781: "Every word you take from the foreigner, Germans,/Is a link in the chain,/With which you, who should be proud,/Submissively let yourselves be shackled to be slaves."<sup>69</sup> If at this time such linguistic chauvinism was still considered extreme, its popularity would greatly increase against the background of the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars. On the one hand, the presence of French troops, magistrates, and bureaucrats highly increased the presence of the French language on German soil.<sup>70</sup> On the other, any cultural and linguistic *frenchification* in the past could in retrospect plausibly be construed as a precursor to military occupation.<sup>71</sup> As such, the topic of linguistic contamination was integrated into the nationalist discourse of popular authors like Ernst Moritz Arndt, Johann Gottlieb Fichte, and Friedrich Ludwig Jahn. These presented the purification of the mother tongue as a patriotic duty in close conjunction with the military liberation of the fatherland. A wave of programmatic writings envisioned new projects of linguistic reform, combining the coinage of German equivalents for what was now (using a newly introduced compound) called *Fremdwörter*<sup>72</sup> with a programme of national education. "Every people honours itself in its mother tongue", wrote Jahn in 1806. Losing this, it "gives up its voting rights among

humanity, and is relegated to a mute role on the stage of peoples".<sup>73</sup> The pathos with which such programmes were put forward served to differentiate them from the more subdued and technical discourse of previous projects of language improvement. The reconstituted German Societies envisioned by Arndt in 1814 were to put the cultivation of the German language in service of the total "banishment and obliteration of the French way and language".<sup>74</sup> In the Berlin Society for German Language established in the same year and the Frankfurt Scholarly Society for the Pure German Language following three years later, such considerations were to gain concrete institutional form.

## Conclusion

Our sketch of the debates on linguistic reform in the German territories has shown how languages of reform cannot always be differentiated simply based on their varying subjects alone. Rather, a single field of reform could become the object of multiple and competing languages at the same time. Taking cues from their vocabularies, standard arguments, models, and other linguistic markers has enabled us to delineate two distinct languages of linguistic reform that not only provided different views of the German language, but in time came to be linked to specific social groups, intellectual contexts, networks, and institutions as well as with specific positions on the political spectrum. Particularly from the last decade of the eighteenth century onwards, debates on language reform became highly politicised. Still, the political nature of these languages remained multifaceted and was not always easy to grasp. As the scholarship on France has shown, linguistic arguments could at times find their way into the rhetoric of political actors in the narrowest sense. In the German context, this is less obvious. It was only during the Wars of Liberation that arguments for linguistic reform were integrated into the explicit political discourse of German nationalism. What has become clear, however, is that even within the confines of what may at first glance seem to be purely scholarly debates, the various languages of linguistic reform were by no means politically neutral. Rather, their divergent viewpoints carried distinct social and political implications. At times these were made explicit, often in efforts to highlight the relevance of a particular linguist's work or the field as a whole. More often they remained buried inside a web of technical claims and arguments. Still, even when they remained below the radar, the points of view transported in these languages helped to shape political discourse by restructuring the linguistic space in which it took place, highlighting some issues while eclipsing others, strengthening certain arguments against others, re-distributing attention and authority. In this sense the political significance of the languages of linguistic reform very often lay in what they conveyed rather than in what was said.

## Notes

1. D. Jenisch, *Philosophisch-kritische Vergleichung und Würdigung von vierzehn ältern und neuern Sprachen Europens* (Berlin: Maurer, 1796).
2. After Adelung's death in 1806 the project was completed by Johann Severin Vater. J.C. Adelung, *Mithridates oder allgemeine Sprachkunde*, 4 vols. (Berlin: Vossische Buchhandlung, 1806–1817).
3. Cf. J. Scharloth, *Sprachnormen und Mentalitäten: Sprachbewusstseinsgeschichte in Deutschland im Zeitraum von 1766–1785* (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 2005), 123–129, 134–141; A. Stukenbrock, *Sprachnationalismus: Sprachreflexion als Medium kollektiver Identitätsstiftung in Deutschland (1617–1945)* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2005), 202–210.
4. All translations are my own. J.W. Meiner, *Versuch einer an der menschlichen Sprache abgebildeten Vernunftlehre* (Leipzig: Breitkopf, 1781), VII–IX, XXXVI.
5. Cf. J. Schiewe, *Die Macht der Sprache: Eine Geschichte der Sprachkritik von der Antike bis zur Gegenwart* (München: Beck, 1998).
6. Cf. A. Gardt, "Die Sprachgesellschaften des 17. und 18. Jahrhunderts", in *Sprachgeschichte: Ein Handbuch zur Geschichte der deutschen Sprache und ihrer Erforschung*, 2nd ed., ed. W. Besch, et al. (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1998), 1:332–348; P. von Polenz, "Die Sprachgesellschaften und die Entstehung eines literarischen Standards in Deutschland", in *History of the Language Sciences*, ed. S. Auroux, et al. (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2000), 1:827–841.
7. Written around 1680, this manuscript remained unpublished until 1846. Still, its contents became widely known through their elaboration in G.W. Leibniz, *Unvorgreifliche Gedanken, betreffend die Ausübung und Verbesserung der deutschen Sprache: Zwei Aufsätze*, ed. U. Pörksen and J. Schiewe (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1983); Cf. A. Gardt, *Sprachreflexion in Barock und Frühaufklärung: Entwürfe von Böhme bis Leibniz* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1994).
8. Cf. R. van Dülmen, *Die Gesellschaft der Aufklärer: Zur bürgerlichen Emanzipation und aufklärerischen Kultur in Deutschland*, New ed. (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1996), 43–54; B.M. Leweling, *Reichtum, Reinigkeit und Glanz: Sprachkritische Konzeptionen in der Sprachreflexion des 18. Jahrhunderts* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2005), 145–176, 218–221; D. Cherubim and A. Walsdorf, eds., *Sprachkritik als Aufklärung: Die Deutsche Gesellschaft in Göttingen im 18. Jahrhundert*, 2nd ed. (Göttingen: Niedersächsische Staats- und Universitäts-Bibliothek, 2005), 165–186.
9. Wolfgang Hardtwig estimated the societies' combined membership to have been about 3,000. W. Hardtwig, *Genossenschaft, Sekte, Verein in Deutschland: Vom Spätmittelalter bis zur Französischen Revolution* (München: Beck, 1997), 224–238.
10. Cf. Ibid., 123–164.
11. G. Haßler, "Sprachtheoretische Preisfragen der Berliner Akademie in der 2. Hälfte des 18. Jahrhunderts: Ein Kapitel der Debatte um Universalien und Relativität", *Romanistik in Geschichte und Gegenwart* 3 (1997): 3–26; C. Neis, *Anthropologie im Sprachdenken des 18. Jahrhunderts: Die Berliner Preisfrage nach dem Ursprung der Sprache (1771)* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2003), 82–99.
12. As an introduction to the theoretical literature, cf. M. Mulsow and A. Mahler, eds., *Die Cambridge School der politischen Ideengeschichte* (Berlin: Suhrkamp, 2010).
13. J.G.A. Pocock, "The Reconstruction of Discourse: Towards the Historiography of Political Thought", in *Political Thought and History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 71. Cf. also Ibid., 74, 76–77.

14. J.G.A. Pocock, “Concepts and Discourses: A Difference in Culture?” in *The Meaning of Historical Terms and Concepts*, ed. H. Lehmann and M. Richter (Washington, DC: German Historical Institute, 1996), 47.
15. Cf. Scharloth, *Sprachnormen*, 5–19.
16. Cf. from a different perspective: T. Jung, *Zeichen des Verfalls: Semantische Studien zur Entstehung der Kulturkritik im 18. und frühen 19. Jahrhundert* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2012), 255–258, 279–300.
17. Sulzer’s submission was not published until 1769. Four years later the German text was included in a collection of his works. J.G. Sulzer, “Observations sur l’influence réciproque de la raison sur le langage et du langage sur la raison”, *Histoire de l’Académie des Sciences et Belles-Lettres* (1769): 413–438; J.G. Sulzer, “Anmerkungen über den gegenseitigen Einfluß der Vernunft in die Sprache, und der Sprache in die Vernunft”, in *Vermischte philosophische Schriften* (Leipzig: Weidmanns Erben und Reich, 1767), 166–198.
18. Sulzer, “Observations”, 418.
19. Cf. Ibid., 418, 428, 432.
20. Sulzer, “Observations”, 423. Cf. also Ibid., 425.
21. Ibid., 418–419, 422, 438.
22. Ibid., 422.
23. D. Diderot, “Encyclopédie”, in *Encyclopédie ou dictionnaire raisonné des arts, des sciences et des métiers*, ed. D. Diderot and J.-B. le Rond d’Alembert (Paris: Briasson, 1755), 5:637–637a. Cf. U. Ricken, *Sprache, Anthropologie, Philosophie in der französischen Aufklärung* (Berlin: Akademie, 1984), 210–231.
24. For later examples, cf. W. Dieckmann, ed., *Reichthum und Armut deutscher Sprache: Reflexionen über den Zustand der deutschen Sprache im 19. Jahrhundert* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1988).
25. C.F. Flögel, *Geschichte des menschlichen Verstandes*, 3rd ed. (Breslau: Meyer, 1776), 207.
26. J.J. Hemmer, *Abhandlung über die deutsche Sprache zum Nutzen der Pfalz* (Mannheim: Akademische Schriften, 1769), 54. See also: J.F. Heynatz, “Vier- und dreißigster Brief”, *Briefe, die Deutsche Sprache betreffend* (1774): 35.
27. Flögel, *Geschichte*, 210. See also: Adelung, *Mithridates*, 1:28.
28. Flögel, *Geschichte*, 208, 214. See also: Sulzer, “Observations”, 424, 426, 431; J.F. Zöllner, “Rede über die Verbesserung der Deutschen Sprache”, in *Beiträge zur deutschen Sprachkunde* (Berlin: Matzdorf, 1794), 1:80.
29. Cf. Scharloth, *Sprachnormen*, 153–154.
30. Sulzer, “Observations”, 418.
31. J.F.A. Kinderling, *Über die Reinigkeit der Deutschen Sprache, und die Beförderungsmittel derselben* (Berlin: Maurer, 1795), 67.
32. G.C. Lichtenberg, “Bemerkungen”, in *Vermischte Schriften*, ed. L.C. Lichtenberg and F. Kies (Göttingen: Dieterich, 1801), 2:57.
33. Many such debates are discussed in O. Brunner, W. Conze and R. Koselleck, eds., *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe: Historisches Lexikon zur politisch-sozialen Sprache in Deutschland*, 9 vols. (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1972–1997).
34. Cf. I. von Treskow, “Geschichte der Intellektuellen in der Frühen Neuzeit: Standpunkte und Perspektiven der Forschung”, in *Intellektuelle in der Frühen Neuzeit*, ed. L. Schorn-Schütte (Berlin: Akademie, 2011), 15–32.
35. J.J. Hemmer, *Deutsche Sprachlehre, zum Gebrauche der kuhrpfälzischen Lande* (Mannheim: Akademische Schriften, 1775), 3–4.
36. Scharloth, *Sprachnormen*, 162–169.
37. “[O]ne should start by improving the language. It should be chiseled, filed down, and worked on by skilled hands.” Friedrich II., *Ueber die deutsche*

- Litteratur, die Mängel die man ihr vorwerfen kann, die Ursachen derselben und die Mittel sie zu verbessern* (Berlin: Decker, 1780), 16.
38. [G.P.], “Ueber die Verderbung der Sitten, durch die immer gewöhlischer werdende Art der feinern Welt über sittliche Gegenstände sich auszudrücken”, *Deutsche Monatsschrift* (1798): 143–159. Also compare J.H.L. Meierotto, “Eine Probe, wie die Sprache eines Volkes dessen Denkungsart und Sittlichkeit schildere”, in *Beiträge zur deutschen Sprachkunde* (Berlin: Matzdorf, 1794), 1:232–264. Cf. Leweling, *Reichtum*, 200–205.
  39. J.E. Stutz, *Kleiner Beitrag zur Beförderung Deutscher Sprachrichtigkeit* (Zerbst: Füchsel, 1789), 2.
  40. J.C. Adelung, *Versuch eines vollständigen grammatisch-kritischen Wörterbuches der Hochdeutschen Mundart* (Leipzig: Breitkopf, 1774), 1: VII–X.
  41. Cf. including the quotations: J. Scharloth, “The Revolutionary Argumentative Pattern in Puristic Discourse: The Swabian Dialect in the Debate About the Standardization of German in the Eighteenth Century”, in *Linguistic Purism in the Germanic Languages*, ed. N. Langer and W.V. Davies (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2005), 84–96.
  42. Cf. G. Sauder, “Die französische Sprache in Deutschland in der zweiten Hälfte des 18. Jahrhunderts”, in *Médiations: Aspects des relations franco-allemandes du XVIIe siècle à nos jours*, ed. M. Grunewald and J. Schlobach (Bern: Peter Lang, 1992), 1:97–123; J. Scharloth, “Der Deutschfranzose: Zu den mentalitätsgeschichtlichen Bedingungen der Sprachnormierungsdebatte zwischen 1766 und 1785”, in “Standardfragen”: *Soziolinguistische Perspektiven auf Sprachgeschichte, Sprachkontakt und Sprachvariation*, ed. J.K. Androutsopoulos and E. Ziegler (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2003), 27–49; S. Arzberger, “The Choice Between the German or French Language for the German Nobility of the Late 18th Century”, in *Germanic Language Histories ‘From Below’*, ed. S. Elspaß, et al. (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2007), 333–342.
  43. A.L. Schlözer, “Varianten in der politischen Terminologie”, *Briefwechsel meist historischen und politischen Inhalts*, no. 4 (1779): 206–207.
  44. On this point, cf. Manuela Albertone’s contribution to this volume, as well as U. Ricken, “Les Dictionnaires et l’image de la Révolution”, in *L’Image de la Révolution française*, ed. M. Vovelle (Paris: Pergamon, 1990), 1:325–335; A. Steuckardt, “L’Abus des mots, des Lumières à la Révolution”, in *La Norme lexicale*, ed. G. Siouffi and A. Steuckardt (Dipralang: Université de Montpellier III, 2001), 177–196.
  45. As an introduction, cf. the contributions in W. Busse and J. Trabant, eds., *Les Idéologues: Sémiotique, théories et politiques linguistiques pendant la Révolution française* (Amsterdam: Benjamins, 1986).
  46. Anonymous, *Wörterbuch der französischen Revolutions-Sprache* (s.l.: s.n., 1799), IV–V.
  47. J.H. Campe, *Briefe aus Paris zur Zeit der Revolution geschrieben* (Braunschweig: Schulbuchhandlung, 1790), 51. Cf. S. Orgeldinger, *Standardisierung und Purismus bei Joachim Heinrich Campe* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1999); J. Kilian, T. Niehr, and J. Schiewe, *Sprachkritik: Ansätze und Methoden der kritischen Sprachbetrachtung*, 2nd ed. (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2016), 22–27.
  48. J.H. Campe, “Proben einiger Versuche von deutscher Sprachbereicherung”, *Braunschweigisches Journal* (1790): 258.
  49. J.H. Campe, *Wörterbuch zur Erklärung und Verdeutschung der unserer Sprache aufgedrungenen fremden Ausdrücke*, 2 vols. (Braunschweig: Schulbuchhandlung, 1801). A second, much enlarged edition was published in 1813.
  50. F. Schiller and J.W. Goethe, “Xenien”, in *Musen-Almanach für das Jahr 1797*, ed. F. Schiller (Tübingen: Cotta, 1797), 234. Campe, whom they

called the *terrible laundress* of the German language, replied in kind, triggering a long-running poetic feud. Cf. A. Kirkness, *Zur Sprachreinigung im Deutschen 1789–1871: Eine historische Dokumentation* (Tübingen: Narr, 1975), 1:136–139; H. Henne, “Braunschweigische Wörterbuchwerkstatt – Joachim Heinrich Campe und sein(e) Mitarbeiter”, in *Reichtum der Sprache: Studien zur Germanistik und Linguistik*, ed. J. Kilian and I. Forster (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2006), 141–142.

51. J.G. Herder, *Ueber die neuere Deutsche Litteratur. Fragmente: Erste Sammlung*, 2nd ed. (Riga: Hartknoch, 1768), 11–19. Cf. on these metaphors W. Köller, *Sinnbilder für Sprache: Metaphorische Alternativen zur begrifflichen Erschließung von Sprache* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2012), 361–481.
52. J.G. Herder, *Verstand und Erfahrung: Eine Metakritik zur Kritik der reinen Vernunft* (Leipzig: Hartknoch, 1799), 1:9–15.
53. Another example of such ambivalence is W. von Humboldt, “Über den Nationalcharakter der Sprache (1795)”, in *Werke*, ed. A. Flitner and K. Giel (Stuttgart: Cotta, 1960–1981), 3:64–81.
54. Herder, *Deutsche Litteratur*, 95–96. In an earlier essay he had similarly mixed elaborations on language as a *treasure of distinct concepts* with claims pointing in a different direction, explaining that “every language has their distinct national character”, such that “nature seems to impose on us an obligation only to our mother tongue, because this is perhaps better attuned to our character and completes our way of thinking”. J.G. Herder, “Ueber den Fleiss in mehreren gelehrten Sprachen”, *Gelehrte Beyträge zu den Rigischen Anzeigen* (1764): 186, 189. Cf. C. Ahlzweig, *Muttersprache – Vaterland: Die deutsche Nation und ihre Sprache* (Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1994), 108–118; T.P. Bonfiglio, *Mother Tongues and Nations: The Invention of the Native Speaker* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2010), 131–139.
55. Cf. e.g. J.G. Sulzer, *Allgemeine Theorie der Schönen Künste* (Leipzig: Weidmanns Erben und Reich, 1771), 1:556–557.
56. Cf. C. Schlaps, “Das Konzept eines deutschen Sprachgeistes in der Geschichte der Sprachtheorie”, in *Nation und Sprache: Die Diskussion ihres Verhältnisses in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, ed. A. Gardt (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2000), 303–348; C. Neis, “Génie de la langue, Apologie der Nationalsprachen und die Berliner Preisfrage von 1771”, in *Texte und Institutionen in der Geschichte der französischen Sprache*, ed. G. Haßler (Bonn: Romanistischer Verlag, 2001), 69–88; G. Haßler and C. Neis, *Lexikon sprachtheoretischer Grundbegriffe des 17. und 18. Jahrhunderts* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2009), 1:777–790; G. Siouffi, “The Political Implications of the Idea of Génie de la langue in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries”, in *Linguistic and Cultural Foreign Policies of European States, 18th-20th Centuries*, ed. K. Sanchez-Summerer and W. Frijhoff (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2017), 179–198.
57. Cf. Stukenbrock, *Sprachnationalismus*, 217–222.
58. For example C.G. Schütz, *Grundsätze der Logik oder Kunst zu Denken* (Lemgo: Meyer, 1773), 58; Flögel, *Geschichte*, 194–197; Jenisch, *Vergleichung*, 2. Cf. on this debate in the context of the Berlin Academy A. Lifschitz, *Language and Enlightenment: The Berlin Debates of the Eighteenth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 65–94.
59. Cf. J. Trabant, *Der Gallische Herkules: Über Sprache und Politik in Frankreich und Deutschland* (Tübingen: Francke, 2002), 147–165.
60. Cf. J.G. Sulzer, *Kurzer Begriff aller Wissenschaften und andern Theile der Gelehrsamkeit* (Frankfurt am Main, 1759), 15; and in response: Herder, *Deutsche Litteratur*, 260.
61. Individual authors still often sought a middle ground by oscillating between various approaches and glossing over their contradictions. Others, like the Swiss philologist Johann Jakob Bodmer, attempted to solve the problem

- by differentiating between two types of idiom, one expressing a language's unique spirit, the other "nothing but deviations and exceptions from this very characteristic constitution of the language, originating in stubbornness, whimsy, wantonness, ignorance, chance". J.J. Bodmer, *Die Grundsätze der deutschen Sprache* (Zürich: Orell, Gessner und Compag., 1768), 106–110.
62. Herder, *Deutsche Litteratur*, 104.
  63. Ibid., 78–79.
  64. Walter Haas' edition shows how their number rose slowly after mid-century, before exploding in the 1780s, cf. W. Haas, ed., *Provinzialwörter: Deutsche Idiotismensammlungen des 18. Jahrhunderts* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1994), XXXVIII–XLV.
  65. Jenisch, *Vergleichung*, 298–303. See also: Meister, *Beyträge*, 2:128–129; J.C. Adelung, *Über die Geschichte der Deutschen Sprache, über Deutsche Mundarten und Deutsche Sprachlehre* (Leipzig: Breitkopf, 1781), 70–71; K.P. Moritz, *Deutsche Sprachlehre für die Damen* (Berlin: Wever, 1782), 541–546; K.P. Moritz, *Deutsche Sprachlehre in Briefen*, 2nd ed. (Berlin: Wever, 1791), 202, 254; F.C. von Savigny, *Vom Beruf unsrer Zeit für Gesetzgebung und Rechtswissenschaft* (Heidelberg: Mohr und Zimmer, 1814), 9.
  66. Cf. Jung, *Zeichen des Verfalls*, 190–233, 297–313.
  67. Cf. A. Kirkness, "Das Phänomen des Purismus in der Geschichte des Deutschen", in *Sprachgeschichte: Ein Handbuch zur Geschichte der deutschen Sprache und ihrer Erforschung*, 2nd ed., ed. W. Besch, et al. (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1998), 1:407–416; W.J. Jones, "'Französisch Kauder-Walsch macht unsre Sprache falsch': Diagnoses of Gallomania", in *Images of Language: Six Essays on German Attitudes to European Languages from 1500 to 1800* (Amsterdam: Benjamins, 1999), 111–170; Stukenbrock, *Sprachnationalismus*, 157–240.
  68. Campe, *Wörterbuch*, 1:46–47.
  69. F.G. Klopstock, "Vergebliche Warnung", in *Musen-Almanach*, ed. J.H. Voß and L.F.G. Goeckingk (Hamburg: Bohn, 1781), 79. See also: F.G. Klopstock, "Unsre Sprache an Uns: Im November 1796", *Neue Berlinische Monatsschrift*, no. 1 (1796): 401–403.
  70. Cf. C. Paye, "'Der französischen Sprache mächtig': Kommunikation im Spannungsfeld von Sprachen und Kulturen im Königreich Westphalen 1807–1813" (München: Oldenbourg, 2013).
  71. As one author put it, "linguistic domination" was the logical prelude to "state domination". J.G. Radlof, *Frankreichs Sprach- und Geistes-Tyranny über Europa* (Leipzig, 1814), 6. See also: Ibid., 42–43; K.W. Kolbe der Ältere, *Über den Wortreichtum der deutschen und französischen Sprache und beider Anlage zur Poësie* (Leipzig: Reclam, 1806), 1: XVII; F.L. Jahn, *Deutsches Volksthum* (Lübeck: Niemann und Comp., 1810), 200; E.M. Arndt, *Ueber Volkshaß und über den Gebrauch einer fremden Sprache* (s.l.: s.n., 1813), 12; and the collection: Anonymous, *Der Sprach-Gerichtshof oder die französische und deutsche Sprache in Deutschland vor dem Richterstuhl der Denker und Gelehrten* (Berlin: Maurer, 1814).
  72. Contrary to Kirkness's often repeated claim that Karl Christian Friedrich Krause was the first to use this term, the earliest instance found in the context of this research was in C.M. Pauli, *Die Sprachreinigkeit von Seiten ihres förderlichen Einflusses auf Sprachbereicherung* (Leipzig: Kummer, 1811), 4–5, 64. Cf. also C.H. Wolke, *Anleit zur deutschen Gesamtsprache* (Dresden, 1812), 5, 399, 431. The expression seems to have been popularised by Jahn. See F.L. Jahn and E. Eiselen, *Die Deutsche Turnkunst zur Einrichtung der Turnplätze* (Berlin, 1816), XXII. Cf. Kirkness, *Zur Sprachreinigung*, 2:422.

73. F.L. Jahn, *Bereicherung des hochdeutschen Sprachschatzes versucht im Gebiete der Sinnverwandtschaft* (Leipzig: Böhme, 1806), XII.
74. E.M. Arndt, *Entwurf einer teutschen Gesellschaft* (Frankfurt am Main: Eichenberg, 1814), 19. See also Ibid., 16, 23.

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# 12 From a Reform Language of Speculation to a Speculative Language of Reform

## Liberalising Trade in Mid-18th-Century France

*Christine Zabel*

### Experiential or Speculative Knowledge in Commerce

Beginning in the late 1670s the merchant François Barrême (1638–1703) published a series of guidebooks for traders (*négociants*),<sup>1</sup> who in his opinion needed better expertise in banking and accounting in order to avoid commercial failures and loss. Only a few years before, in 1675, Jacques Savary (1622–1690) had published his famous *Le parfait Négociant*,<sup>2</sup> a work that not only propagated the ideal of a good and honest merchant who never tried to make profit out of the detriment of others but who also demanded a better commercial education for merchants who were responsible, in Savary's view, for their own success or failure. Savary placed personal mistakes, not *fortuna*, at the top of the list of causes of commercial failure, noting that “the merchants' and traders' ignorance, imprudence & ambition cause their insolvencies.”<sup>3</sup> Merchant handbooks, popular in the 16th and 17th centuries throughout Europe, reflected the opinion that commerce was potentially dangerous and therefore had to be policed if its destructive forces were to be mitigated.<sup>4</sup> In order to reduce the risk of insolvency or fraud they highlighted the importance of a merchant's education based on principles of experience and best practices.<sup>5</sup> This conception of mercantile knowledge went hand in hand with an increased codification and regulation of policing commerce, e.g. in the 1673 *Code de commerce*.

In his *Le grand Banquier de France*<sup>6</sup> of 1681, written for bankers as well as traders, professors, travelers, and anyone concerned with foreign money,<sup>7</sup> Barrême emphasised that experience alone could not help to avoid commercial or financial losses and explained that a commentator – he probably referred to the mathematician Claude Irson – had declared that the anticipatory and forward-looking calculation of profit and loss of exchange letters was an *unnecessary speculation*.<sup>8</sup> Nobody, not even traders in the opinion of the commentator, needed to know how to calculate money exchange and transferal rates *before* the transaction was done. Instead it was sufficient to gain knowledge from experience of past

profits and losses and hence to update this knowledge by counting what one held in his hands after a transaction was completed. Barrême disagreed vehemently with this, demonstrating in many examples how it was to the detriment of a trader to not be able to anticipate his gains and losses before he planned a transaction:

if it were necessary to wait for the return in order to know the profit one makes with an exchange letter and if it were true that this knowledge only revealed itself in the future, one would have to conclude that at the time of exchange one couldn't know anything about the profits, . . . this would mean he would be trading without causal knowledge und would be subject to hazard.<sup>9</sup>

In order to make profit, in other words, and so to prevent insolvency, a *négociant* needed, in Barrême's opinion, to plan and to calculate his various future engagements if he did not want to be subject to hazard or chance. Backward-looking learning from experience was for Barrême both too little and too late. If a trader wanted to forego future risks he needed to undertake this anticipating speculation.

While Barrême's conception of forward-looking speculation was still implicit and rather exceptional in the 17th century, the economist and later Inspector General of Manufactures and Commerce, Louis-Paul Abeille (1719–1807) argued about one century later more explicitly in favour of commercial speculation. In his *Lettre d'un Négociant*<sup>10</sup> of October 1763, in the context of the liberalisation laws that "freed the grain trade by dismantling the entire police apparatus in the name of the natural rights of proprietors and the political economy of growth,"<sup>11</sup> he defended the self-interest of the *négociants* and pointed out that speculation within a free market system did not reduce commercial knowledge to the consideration of trading routes, exchange rates, or expertise in double book-keeping. Instead, speculation pointed to a reflection on constantly changing market conditions and possibilities. In other words, for the writer it was not sufficient to calculate demand, costs, and gains. In a free market system a trader needed to think about location, price developments, and timing, always in respect to his competitors on the market. Commercial action was hence always relational to consumers and competitors and any action could be expected to trigger actions and reactions that had to be anticipated in a good speculation. Speculation implied that best practices could not be learned via experience alone, as the market conditions were constantly changing. Similar to Barrême's earlier conception, speculative knowledge relied, also in this view, on observation of present developments, not on past experience alone, and was a way of reflecting on and anticipating multiple possible future scenarios within a market system. Speculation entailed an observation of customers' demand, a competitor's reactions to one's own actions, and their combined influence on

price developments. Speculation was thus a wagering on future chances and choices that were considered most advantageous to one's interests. Consequently a speculator, a *négociant de grain*, was much more than a simple merchant, as he had to make more choices and take bigger risks.<sup>12</sup> "They run the risk of culture (breeding), the risk of abundance & of rarity, and of competition in commerce."<sup>13</sup> The speculator consequently should have the liberty to make the decisions that seemed best to him in order to mitigate his risks, in short to undertake his speculation. So to enable the trader to act reasonably, and not passionately, France ought to reform the grain trade and to depart from the established policing practice introduced under Colbert and defended by Jacques Savary and instead needed to leave the regulation of commerce to the grain-traders: "We should thus surrender the care to supply bare places to commerce & to commerce alone,"<sup>14</sup> a demand that Abeille condensed in the famous words: *Laissez-nous faire*,<sup>15</sup> let us do (what we need to do).

In these explanations arguments for speculation and reform are deeply interconnected. In contrast to Barrême's assessment in the 17th century, Abeille's conception was not singular in his own time: economic thinkers have repeatedly drawn on this connection since at least the early 1750s so that we can interpret this systematic reference to speculative commercial knowledge in the context of the liberalisation of the grain trade as a veritable language of reform. This chapter thus aims to study the interconnection of arguments for speculation and arguments for reform that preceded or paralleled the more ideological reform-conception of the Physiocrats, for whom commercial liberalisation was only a tool within their static ontological-agricultural conception for society.<sup>16</sup>

Moreover, this chapter will identify a reform language of speculation and argue that it was shaped by three important assumptions: First, it held that the proposed departure from the interventionist policy was a deeply enlightened and necessary measure. In order to achieve such an enlightened reform a new form of commercial knowledge was needed that could help to better address the contingencies of the market. This *political economy of speculation* put the intelligence and forward-looking skills of the individual traders at the centre of its argument: Reform was possible only because a government could and indeed needed to trust a traders' self-interested rationality that, in turn, would contribute to the nation's good. Second, the reference to *speculation* can be considered an indicator for the novel and forward-looking character of the proposed reform, which implied the emancipation from past pathways and from experiential knowledge. In this sense the reform was not only itself enlightened, but also an *enlightening* process. Similar to a trader's speculations that could not be undertaken once and for all but needed continuous updating, the envisioned reform was also designed as an ongoing material and metaphysical process of liberating the French people from their servitude to irrational passion. Third, the invocation of speculation

helped to justify a conceptual shift that no longer designed the market as a *place* that could and needed to be policed but imagined an ever-changing (speculative) market-*space*. *Speculation*, thus, explicitly and implicitly invoked the temporal and spatial dimension of the reform creating a national, patriotic market through a *continuous* enlightened reform process. The chapter will look at this reform language in two steps: First it will concentrate on the early arguments verbalised *before* the reform measures introduced by Louis XV in 1763 and 1764. In a second step, the chapter will highlight Louis-Paul Abeille's conception that he developed in the context of the reform years. This will help us to understand the interdependencies between reform measures and the reform language of speculation.

## Reform Language of Speculation Before the Reform

When scholars are concerned with French political economies concentrating on the liberalisation of commerce, they are often predominantly interested in the liberalising ideas of the Physiocrats and the reforms introduced by Anne Marie Jacques Turgot (1727–1781) after he became Inspector General in 1774.<sup>17</sup> The Physiocrats' founding fathers, François Quesnay, and Turgot often figure as the main advocates of commercial and economic liberalisation in the Old Regime.<sup>18</sup> And yet, as Steve Kaplan has pointed out, it were the reform measures undertaken by the government of Louis XV in May 1763 and July 1764 that were the most far reaching and maybe the most important reform legislation of the Old Regime. They were a radical shift away from the interventionist and police-centred provisioning tradition that had been the norm since Colbert's *Code de Commerce* of 1673 and Louis XIV's 1699 edict, as Louis XV now allowed a grain trade that was free from police controls and the governmental surveillance of traders.<sup>19</sup>

However, the political and economic vision embodied in the 1763 and 1764 reform measures had much older roots that were embedded in the criticism of the policing practices introduced in Louis XIV's reign and in anti-Colbertist opinions expressed, for example, by the officer Pierre le Pesant de Boisguilbert (1646–1714), (the infamous) John Law (1671–1729), and Jean-François Melon (1675–1738).<sup>20</sup> However, more explicitly, liberalising ideas were articulated after the dearths of 1747 and 1751–1752, and thus preceded the physiocratic ideas of Dr. Quesnay and his disciples and collaborators or even those of the Gournay circle.<sup>21</sup> It was in fact as early as 1753 that the public servant at Bordeaux Claude-Jacques Herbert (1700–1758) designed for the first time this "political economy of speculation", which helped him to argue for the liberalisation of the French grain trade. His *Essai sur la police générale des grains*<sup>22</sup> strongly criticised the interventionist and prohibitive grain administration under Louis XV and his predecessor and made a strong case for a new commercial epistemology.

Herbert's assessment was widely read and republished many times, and its arguments were re-used by many other *liberalisers*.<sup>23</sup> In drawing on the history of the grain policy and its jurisdiction, Herbert argued with unprecedented clarity for the liberalisation of the grain trade, opposing the author of the *Traité de la police*<sup>24</sup> Nicolas de La Mare (1639–1723).

The author of the *Essai* began his explanations with a quest for (good) historical examples that could legitimise the French prohibitive laws. However, his historical analysis could not offer such samples, leading him to explain that the prohibitive grain policy was a relatively new invention in French history, and so not originally French, and was only introduced gradually after the experience of famines. However, the main step towards an interventionist policy was taken by Louis XIV in 1699 at a moment of extraordinary shortage, when there was no time to rationally analyse the challenges of the grain supply or to come up with alternative ways to secure subsistence.<sup>25</sup> The author thus considered the introduction of the French interventionist grain administration a passionate and unreasonable act, bereft of calm observation and analytical clarity of thought on the different options that could have helped to better address the subsistence crisis. In this view the restrictive policy discarded an originally French liberty and so borrowed its arguments for an interventionist policy from Roman, not French, law. However, Herbert did not think antiquity, and more specifically Roman history, offered reasonable examples for contemporary French interests.<sup>26</sup> Rather, he suggested drawing ideals of emulation from the *most enlightened* modern nations, like England or the Netherlands.<sup>27</sup>

In analysing the examples of the English or Dutch commercial administrations, the French suspicion of traders – and commerce more generally – seemed to Herbert, despite the administration's claims to the contrary, not reasonable or enlightened at all. "Why do we feel the need to police our grain trade more than these nations?" the author asked. "Are we in any way more usurious than these nations so that we have more prejudices against ourselves than others?"<sup>28</sup> The distrust shown to traders was, for Herbert, a heritage of still unenlightened, magical convictions that exchanged the fright of demonic workings and witchcraft with the fear of secretly plotting monopolisers and usurers that acted against the public good.<sup>29</sup> The public servant now criticised the police's collaboration with these unenlightened views and unveiled the current grain trade administration as a concession to the people's fears. The people's unreasonable and passionate self-love that did not allow to think and see beyond immediate needs or to envision new possibilities thus provoked a policy that was harmful and that prohibited a new policy that could better secure regular grain supply through market competition.<sup>30</sup> The French grain administration thus prevented the benefits of a free market system that in turn would be able to offer grain at more affordable prices.<sup>31</sup> In this sense liberalising laws would not only allow for material improvement but could also be metaphysically beneficial in

freeing the people from its slavish and sheepish submission to passion. In order to remedy the people's false beliefs, the laws had to change first so that they would enlighten public opinion.<sup>32</sup> The solution thus had to be introduced from above by a wise legislator and father of the nation. As a good and enlightened servant of the administration and the public good, Herbert sought to assist the government by presenting his reforming ideas of a *political economy of speculation*.

He drew on the connection between self-interest and reason: instead of being a danger that needed to be policed, commercial self-interest was, in Herbert's view, the foundation of a free market system that would have balancing and stabilising effects. As self-interest was based on reason and not passion, it was for the author the best guarantee of a sufficient supply of grain. However, and this was at the heart of Herbert's political economy, traders could only pursue their self-interests if they attained a new form of commercial knowledge that would help to better observe and deal with the ever-changing (and unstable) conditions of the market than the older concept of mercantile knowledge outlined for example in Jacques Savary's *Parfait Négociant*.<sup>33</sup> The latter conception had been mostly based on experiential knowledge and continuity of practice, which also constituted the foundation of the Colbertist police administration, which coerced merchants, and this was still true by the mid-18th century, to declare their trading routes, their purchased amount, to register by name, and to appear regularly at the local markets.<sup>34</sup> Herbert's concept of a *political economy of speculation*, however, accentuated a trader's intelligence and pro-active faculties of anticipating future, and thus uncertain, market developments. Hence only these *speculations* could create the desired price *equilibrium* and not an interventionist price-fixing. A trader thus needed to undertake a calculation of risk and chances that required constant updating based on the continuous observation of changes in a web of interdependencies. Consequently speculation was only possible in a free market system and the same time also the foundation of it:<sup>35</sup>

Somebody, who has the plan to engage in commerce of grain, cannot undertake a speculation, if he does not have the full liberty to dispose of his merchandise as it pleases him & at any time. Because every sensible man who calculates, will not buy land & conserve a merchandise that is subject to a lot of accidents (or hazards), if he does not foresee to cover all his expenses & or to draw some benefits from it. How can he be happy (about his property), if he fears that he could be impaired in this refusal (to come to the market) & if he does not have the right to send his grain abroad because this would fulfill his purposes and convene his interests?<sup>36</sup>

That Canon law tradition distinguished between legitimate or illegitimate commercial action by defining usury as the interest taken in a loan<sup>37</sup>

was for the Herbert a useless and indeed irrational distinction since *all* human actions were, in his view, motivated by self-interest. Accordingly the speculation of contingencies and the act of envisioning time and place of future transactions and of calculating chances within a fluctuating and continuously changing market system was for him no immoral gamble. Rather, speculation appeared as the art of precise observation of present developments and as a wise estimation of future possibilities. With the sociologist of risk who famously distinguished between risk and danger, Niklas Luhmann, we could say that a trader's wager on his/her best option of future transactions (as opposed to the continuity of best practices) helped to turn external dangers into internal risks one took.<sup>38</sup> Similarly, to continuously observe developments and to adapt one's actions could help to mitigate this risk. Herbert's understanding of speculation, therefore, still implied practical know-how but went far beyond empirical reflection. By contrast to the concept of mercantile knowledge that was based on the continuation of best practice, speculators needed to wager on the *time* and the *place* of their present and future commercial engagements. This wager in turn needed to be continuously updated and was thus relatively unreliant upon former trading practices. Herbert's *political economy of speculation* introduced to the French, about two decades earlier than Adam Smith's reflections, the idea of the market as a system or space rather than a specific market-place that could and should be policed. Furthermore, speculation also pointed to a spatial dimension of the market because the ability to speculate contingent variables prepared traders to act wisely beyond provincial boundaries. Speculation thus helped to create a national market because, as Herbert pointed out, "the provinces are not separate states; they are all part of the same body, the children of the same family. They cannot provide for subsistence without helping each other on a daily basis".<sup>39</sup>

In a similar vein, François Véron Duverger de Forbonnais (1722–1800), a year after Herbert, explained in his *Elemens du Commerce*<sup>40</sup> that prices could only be balanced in a free national market. He explained that morally good commercial behaviour that relied on inherited and experiential knowledge (*savoir le conduire*) did not necessarily help one to be a successful trader (*savoir le faire*).<sup>41</sup> Instead, as Herbert had explained just a year before, Forbonnais also considered commercial competition as the active principle of any useful commerce.<sup>42</sup> Like Herbert, Forbonnais too considered the trader's self-interest of making profit as stimulus for commercial speculation and considered it the most important incentive for a functioning market.<sup>43</sup> Only this enlightened epistemology could avoid further subsistence crises and guarantee stable grain prices. For Forbonnais both extremely high and unprofitably low grain prices were a danger to a functioning nutriment supply: While low prices robbed the producer of the surplus money necessary to invest into the next year's culture, high prices made flour or bread unaffordable to the people. In

the latter case traders would not be able to sell their products despite the high demand for it. The author thus came to the conclusion that commercial speculation was necessary to guarantee constant food supply:

If all subjects had formed the same speculation, not only would they have been spared of the public inconvenience of a ruinous balance during the dearth, but also of the individual inconveniences which are an effect (of the former), either because the grain-prices are too low, or because the prices are too excessive, & often for several years.<sup>44</sup>

To make this necessary speculation possible the French now needed to create a free national market, as Forbonnais explained:

The goal of commerce certainly is to establish abundance of provision; but it is the trader's object to make profit. The former cannot be achieved but through the latter . . . But how can a speculation generate profit, if it is defended to keep the products until they yield a surplus?<sup>45</sup>

Forbonnais admitted that it was not always possible to precisely estimate the effects of commercial competition as this would mean to "calculate the efforts of genius or to measure the human mind".<sup>46</sup> Speculation was thus an approximate anticipation that entailed a wagering on possible scenarios and effects that was based upon mathematical calculation and evaluation of consumer demands according to available choices and price developments.<sup>47</sup> Only the traders' multiple individual speculations (and not the interventionist measures of one actor, the state) could generate a national market through inter-provincial grain circulation, where all citizens could help each other out:

The citizens of the same state, the children of the same father offer each other a helping hand; if they are prohibited to help each other, some of them are forced to buy expensive help from abroad while their brothers live in an opulent abundance.<sup>48</sup>

A similar plea for a national market was also adopted by the Abbé Coyer (1707–1782), who, in his *La Noblesse commerçante*<sup>49</sup> of the year 1756, argued for a patriotic reform of the grain trade that allowed the (impoverished) nobility to make themselves useful to their *patrie* and to contribute to France's power by enriching themselves in a free national market. With this demand Coyer implicitly endorsed the self-interested and rational speculation of an educated elite. Yet as both Coyer and Forbonnais made clear, for this to happen legislation needed to change first,<sup>50</sup> a plea that was eventually put into practice in May 1763. In a next step, this chapter will therefore explore the reform language in times of reform.

## A Speculative Reform Language in Times of Reform

Many of the suggestions by the liberal reformers were put into practice in 1763, a few months after the end of the Seven Years' War, when Louis XV's government granted inter-provincial freedom of trade and thus took away all legal ground for passport controls or registration of commercial action by the police. In May 1763 the government finally endorsed the national market these liberalising thinkers had argued for,<sup>51</sup> a fact that many of the reformers (Herbert was already dead at the time) thought to be their personal success. Moreover, not only did the May Declaration create a speculative, national market, it also allowed *all* citizens to engage in trade if they desired to do so and no longer restricted commerce to trained merchants and *négociants* – a fact that Coyer had criticised. The May Declaration furthermore established that everyone could not only engage in commerce without formal registration but also allowed to trade in association (in *compagnie*) or outside and beyond the official market-place. In other words, clandestine commerce, the stocking of supply, or irregular appearance at local grain markets could not be pursued any longer.<sup>52</sup> As Steve Kaplan has made clear, three months after the end of the disastrous Seven Years' War the government thus purveyed an image of “enlightened kingship” through reform from above and so departed from one of the main conceptions of kingship as *pater familias* responsible for subsistence by means of severe policing of the grain trade.<sup>53</sup> With its important deviation from a conception of commerce that predominantly protected consumer interests, the liberal administration now rather strengthened the rights of agricultural producers and the traders.<sup>54</sup> Yet how to convince the public of this reform without causing an uprising of the people who jealously protected their right of subsistence, if they felt (real or imagined) dearth or monopolisation of grain?<sup>55</sup>

In order to defend the new liberal regime Herbert's *political economy of speculation* was publicised again by the later Inspector General of Manufacture and Commerce Louis-Paul Abeille (1719–1807). In his *Lettre d'un Négociant*<sup>56</sup> of October 1763 the author now detailed even more explicitly what speculation entailed. Also in Abeille's view it implied calculation of demand from potential buyers and consideration of competition, along with their influence on market price. Accordingly, speculation as new form of commercial knowledge offered insight as to *where* and *when* to sell one's agricultural goods:

The traders understand, that if one country is short on grain, they can sell grain there easily enough and for a good price; the very moment their speculations are completed, they have to send their grain instantly in order to profit from the moment (time window) when the sale is favorable.<sup>57</sup>

However, as Abeille further explained, a trader had to understand that demand also changed according to competition on the market and to price fluctuations. Furthermore, a trader had to be aware of the fact that his own speculations would inspire similar considerations and encourage competitors to take their chances at the market too. Hence a trader needed to anticipate how interests of potential competitors changed in response to his own speculations:

He [the trader] thus needs to foresee that the desire to make profits will multiply similar speculations to his own; therefore, abundance & low grain-prices will very probably follow after high demand & good prices. But there is a reason to why a trader puts himself between the risk to lose or to make profit: it is the hope to sell a commodity somewhere for a reasonable price before the competition will lower the price of the below under its real value.<sup>58</sup>

Like Herbert's, Abeille's conception of speculation also held that the consideration of trading routes, exchange rates, or expertise in double book-keeping could not suffice to survive in a free market. Instead the idea of commercial speculation included a reflection on constantly changing market conditions. Following from this, it was not sufficient for a trader to calculate demands, costs, and gains. Rather, a successful trader needed to constantly think about ideal trading locations, price developments, and timing of his commercial engagements, always in respect to his competitors on the market. Accordingly any action could be expected to trigger actions and reactions that had to be anticipated in a speculation. Consequently, step one of the speculation was for Abeille to choose the best location according to demand (and not because he was coerced to regularly appear at a market).

We have seen why and how speculations in commerce will direct a trader to places where the harvest has been insufficient; we have explained how the multitude of speculators & the impossibility of collaboration, will necessarily work towards the effect that the dividend payouts of grain are always higher than the actual demands. All is reduced to the following axiom: commerce seeks places where the merchandise sells well.<sup>59</sup>

A second step was to choose the right time to engage in an enterprise. A trader had to reflect on his position in the market and ask, how many competitors have already chosen similar locations or ways of transactions etc.? How will my own actions change demand and price evolution?<sup>60</sup> For Abeille, as for his predecessors, speculation implied that commercial knowledge could not be obtained via experience alone.<sup>61</sup> Rather, speculative knowledge relied on observation of present conditions, of its changes

and progresses, and was a way of envisioning possible future scenarios. Speculation thus allowed one to follow one's own self-interest, which in turn would help to further the public good.<sup>62</sup> As the sovereign could trust his trading citizens to be capable of precise and continuous speculations, further regulation or intervention were, as Abeille made clear, no longer needed.

Abeille's *Lettre* had made a great impression on his readers. Dr. Quesnay was so taken with the clarity of Abeille's arguments that he invited the author to join the physiocratic movement, and the physiocratic *Gazette du Commerce* now also maintained a very similar point of view considering speculation to be the necessary commercial knowledge for a free grain market.<sup>63</sup> Abeille, encouraged by the success of his arguments, repeated his appraisal of a free market in his *Reflexions sur la police de grains* published in March 1764. In it he now argued for free international trade, asking, what trader would engage in trade with high export taxes when he thought through his options? "How can one reconcile the fair profits of a wise speculation with laws that are excessive in themselves, & which would double the price one counts on?"<sup>64</sup>

In contrast to the earlier liberalising promptings, Abeille now boldly concentrated on the international dimension of a free grain trade, in other words, his *Reflexions* were predominantly concerned with the issue of grain exportation. Once more following Herbert's example, Abeille analysed historical precedents and ideals for commercial emulation. However, in contrast to Herbert, who had applauded the English example, after the experiences in the Seven Years' War the author rejected the English model.<sup>65</sup> Being nevertheless a good heir of the liberalising language he still studied and analysed his neighbour's grain administration, particularly in order to learn from their mistakes so that France could, after the disaster of the war, surpass her competitor if not in the military than in the economic realm at least.<sup>66</sup> To dismiss British economic policies as half-hearted measures that only introduced a half-liberty seemed to Abeille the best rhetorical strategy after the events of the disastrous war and so to disengage the liberal cause from an English ideal.<sup>67</sup> Accordingly, France needed to endorse perfect (not limited English) liberty where the export and import of agricultural goods were concerned, and this could only be achieved through forward-looking speculation and not through backward-looking emulation of best (English) practice alone.<sup>68</sup>

In order to convince his readers of his arguments he anticipated doubts and questions about the novel freedom: For those who might argue that France had already felt the detrimental effects of a liberal policy after the admission of a short-term liberty of general exportation, Abeille responded that this experience was no proof against liberty because until the current year it had only been granted occasionally after times of abundance.<sup>69</sup> Consequently the experienced liberty was still part of interventionist measures and could thus not be defined as liberty at all.

Following from this, neither the French nor the English experiences could count as proof against the effects of a free market as both countries had only established insufficient liberty.

In this sense speculative commercial knowledge could only be forward-looking (not be based on experience) as commercial liberty was still unprecedented. The belief in the need to provide security through interference and prohibition was for Abeille categorically fated to fail as intervention (for example in form of purchasing king's grain in times of dearth) was in nature a backward-looking action that could only react after the crisis had already occurred and so would always come a little too late.<sup>70</sup> By contrast, within only a few years a new commercial regime based on the anticipatory speculations of the traders would, so Abeille believed, demonstrate its curing effects.<sup>71</sup> By contrast, according to the author's conviction, the prohibitive policy turned the otherwise reasonable speculations in a hazardous gamble. The kingdom was thus not well prepared because the interventions of one actor (the state) could not compete with the remedy effects of the speculations of the many.<sup>72</sup> Prohibitions made wise and good speculation impossible, which alone could secure a constant circulation of grain.<sup>73</sup> The current policy thus had terrorising effects<sup>74</sup> and even the May Declaration, although being in itself a wise law, could not level out the long-term costs of a destructive policy.<sup>75</sup>

As Herbert had done a decade earlier, Abeille also accused the views of the unenlightened people to have caused the current terrorising policy.<sup>76</sup> Similar to the Bordelais public servant he also engaged in a historical quest for good examples, however, only to conclude that past and present experiences could not offer any ideals as full liberty was nowhere to be found in history. Whereas Herbert had still argued for an older and original French liberty in order to legitimise a French national market, Abeille completely dismissed all past and present examples and argued for a new style of thinking about economics and for an unprecedented and unseen liberty in order to legitimise an international free market. For the latter, the Declaration of May 1763 was indeed a step in the right direction but clearly not enough to secure French subsistence. As he thought experience to have ceased to give good instructions for legislators (at least until the right experience was created), he thus speculated (and wagered on) future chances and developments and so turned the reform language of speculation into a speculative language of reform.

Abeille's liberalising efforts proved successful for his career. The author was made Inspector General of Manufactures and Commerce in the new commercial regime that was built on many of his own ideas. While the Declaration of May 1763 had only established a free national grain market, the Edict of July 1764 now went further and introduced an international dimension to the new liberalisation and permitted free exportation of grain and flour. While the traditional approach had foreseen a strict interdiction of export in times of shortage and only occasionally allowed

for restricted exportation in times of abundance and considered unauthorised grain exportation a *crime de lèse-majesté*, the July measures now inverted the rule by turning the exception into the new norm: It maintained that only in case of extreme price decline in three consecutive markets, exportation was to be automatically interrupted, however, only at the affected market-place. In the rest of the country land exportation was to remain free at all border points with collection bureaus.<sup>77</sup> However, and this points to the procedural character of the reform, the edict made one concession and excluded the capital from the liberalisation laws. Only Paris was allowed to retain its older rights of subsistence based on police provisioning practices because the government thought the reform bore incalculable risks and so feared an uprising by the Parisians. The new reform measures first needed to prove efficient before they were to be introduced in the capital, where the people seemed to be even more suspicious of hoarders and monopolisers than in the rest of the kingdom. This points to the fact that the reform measures of 1763 and 1764 were designed as the beginning of a longer reform process endorsing new, enlightened commercial and political values.<sup>78</sup> However, the planned reform process did not last very long, and the new liberal regime was quickly abandoned by the government when it became clear that the new administration resulted in a complete breakdown of the supply system.<sup>79</sup>

## Conclusions

In both instances, in his *Lettre* and his *Réflexions*, Abeille successfully condensed existing reform ideas into an appealing language and so shaped the way for actual reform measures. His grasp of political opportunities also did not mislead the *économiste* a few years later when Abeille, newly assigned secretary of the *bureau de commerce*, officially ended relations with the declining physiocratic movement, much to the regret of Dupont de Nemours.<sup>80</sup> His own liberalising ideas rather had a lot in common with the liberalising language disseminated by Herbert, Forbonnais, and Coyer a decade before and that accentuated a trader's self-interested intelligence that created the basis for the self-regulating capacities of a free market system.<sup>81</sup> In the 1750s and 1760s, roughly two decades before Adam Smith's *The Wealth of Nations*, this liberalising *political economy of speculation* thus not only thought about the market as a contingent system whose rules could never be fully apprehended but also designed a commercial epistemology that helped to derive from experiential, mercantile knowledge. This *political economy of speculation* that helped to argue for the reform of the grain trade neither relied on a powerful entity to regulate commercial or financial markets nor did it accept a nebulous *self-organisation* or the mysterious workings of the *invisible hand(s)*. This would have implied that markets function

according to a stable set of rules, however hidden or shrouded they might be.<sup>82</sup> In contrast, speculation accentuated individual agency that, however, was constrained by a constantly changing web of interdependencies. Consequently, knowledge about the market could not be learned once and for all but needed constant updating. Accordingly, the reform could only be a continuous process as well.

Whereas the liberty of trade was in this *political economy of speculation* first depicted as an older and original French way that could only be re-established if the government trusted the wise speculations of its traders (Herbert), in Abeille's account it was presented as the best way to facilitate an unprecedented new commercial regime. By the middle of the 1760s the reform language of speculation thus itself engaged in speculative reflections by imagining and designing new and unseen future pathways. In so doing the language of reform wagered on best future options without having empirical proof for it at hand and thus became itself speculative.

## Notes

1. For example: F. Barrême, *Le Cayer curieux de Barreme, aritméticien, contenant plusieurs pièces du temps, sérieuses et agréables* (Paris: Chez Jacques Langlois, n.d.); F. Barrême, *Comptes-faits de Barreme, en francs et rappes suisses, suivis du calcul de l'intérêt de l'argent à demi pour cent par mois, pour tous les jours et mois de l'année* (Montbéliard: Chez Jacques Langlois, n.d.).
2. J. Savary, *Le parfait Négociant ou instruction générale pour ce qui regarde le commerce de toute sorte de marchandises, tant de France que des pays étrangers* (Paris: Chez Louis Billaine, 1675).
3. “l'ignorance, l'imprudence & l'ambition des Marchands & des Negocians [sic] causent ordinairement les faillites”. Ibid., 3.
4. See for example A. Kessler, *Revolution in Commerce: The Parisian Merchant Court and the Rise of Commercial Society in Eighteenth-Century France* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2007), 16–56.
5. For the merchants' interpretative authority in matters commercial and their knowledge based on experience, see especially T. Leng, “Epistemology: Expertise and Knowledge in the World of Commerce”, in *Mercantilism Reimagined: Political Economy in Early Modern Britain and Its Empire*, ed. P.J. Stern and C. Wennerlind (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 97–116, esp. 100–102.
6. F. Barrême, *Le grand Banquier de France, ou le livre des monnoyes étrangères réduites en monnoyes de France, pour les negocians, & pour les voyageurs: Se vend au bout du Pont-neuf par Barreme* (Paris: Se vend au bout du Pont-neuf par Barreme, 1681).
7. Ibid., 4.
8. Ibid., 4.
9. “D'autre part s'il estoit nécessaire d'attendre ce Retour pour sçavoir le Profit qui se fait sur une Lettre de Change, & que cette connoissance dépendît de l'avenir, il faudroit conclure que dans le temps qu'on donne & qu'on prend de l'argent à Change on ne le sçauoit pas; & si on ne le sçavoit pas ce seroit negocier sans connoissance de cause & au hazard, puis qu'on ignoroit le Profit qu'on y feroit.” Ibid., 4.

10. L.-P. Abeille, *Lettre d'un Négociant sur la nature du commerce de grain* [S.I.]: [s.n.], 1763.
11. S. Kaplan, “The Famine Plot Persuasion in Eighteenth-Century France”, *Transaction of the American Philosophical Society* 72, no. 3 (1982): 52.
12. Abeille, *Lettre*, 20.
13. “Ils courrent les risques de la culture, ceux de l’abondance & de la rareté, ceux de la concurrence du commerce.” *Ibid.*, 22.
14. “C’est donc au commerce, & au commerce seul qu’il faut abondonner le soin d’approvisionner les lieux dégarnis.” *Ibid.*, 14.
15. *Ibid.*, 23.
16. I agree with John Shovlin here, who makes a case to not exclusively look at physiocratic thinking when studying French political economy. See J. Shovlin, *The Political Economy of Virtue: Luxury, Patriotism, and the Origins of the French Revolution* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2006), 3.
17. On Physiocracy, see G. Weulersse, *Le mouvement physiocratique en France (de 1756 à 1770)* (Paris: Johnson Reprint Corporation; Wakefield Publishers, 1968); P. Steiner, *La ‘science nouvelle’ de l’économie politique* (Paris: Presse universitaire de France, 1998); J. Riskin, “The ‘Spirit of System’ and the Fortunes of Physiocracy”, *History of Political Economy* 35 (2003): 42–74; L. Vardi, *The Physiocrats and the World of the Enlightenment* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012).
18. See for example E. Rothschild, “Social Security and Laissez Faire in Eighteenth-Century Political Economy”, *Population and Development Review* 21, no. 4 (1995): 711–744, 718.
19. See S. Kaplan, *Bread, Politics and Political Economy in the Reign of Louis XV*, 2nd ed. (New York, NY: Anthem Press, 2015), 97–111, here esp. 97–99.
20. *Ibid.*, 97–98.
21. *Ibid.*, 97. Lately some researchers have more intensively concentrated on the liberalising ideas of Vincent de Gournay (1712–1759) and his circle. See for example L. Charles, F. Lefebvre, and C. Théré, eds., *Le cercle de Vincent de Gournay: savoir économiques et pratiques administrative en France au milieu du XVIIIe siècle* (Paris: Institut national d’études démographique, 2011); S. Meysonnier, “Vincent de Gournay (1712–1759) et la ‘Balance des hommes’”, *Population* 45, no. 1 (1990): 87–112.
22. C.J. Herbert, *Essai sur la police générale de grains, sur leurs prix, sur les effets de l’agriculture* (Berlin, 1755).
23. Herbert’s *Essai* was republished in six editions until 1757. See Kaplan, *Bread*, 101.
24. N. de La Mare, *Traité de la police: ou l’on trouvera l’histoire de son établissement, les fonctions et les prerogatives de ses magistrats; toutes les loix et tous les reglemens qui la concernent. . . ,* 4 vols. (Paris: J. & P. Cot, 1705–1738).
25. Herbert, *Essai*, 93, see also 8–9.
26. *Ibid.*, 6.
27. *Ibid.*, 142.
28. “Sommes-nous plus avares, plus usuriers qu’eux? L’intérêt regne également chez toutes les Nations: mais nous avions un préjugé plus que les autres” *Ibid.*, 44.
29. “Ainsi c’est de tout tems que l’esprit humain s’est formé successivement divers fantomes, enfans de l’ignorance & de la crédulité: quand l’idée des Démons et des Magiciens s’est évanouie, l’on a cru trouver des causes de disette plus vraisemblables, dans les manœuvres des Usuriers, des Avares, des Monopoleurs.” *Ibid.*, 11–13.
30. “C’est le cri ordinaire du peuple. Il ne regarde point dans l’avenir; le présent seul le touche; le sort d’autrui l’intéresse rarement. Fatal bandeau de l’amour

- personnel, qui ne laisse voir qu'autour de soi." Ibid., 94–95. See also Ibid., 42–43.
31. Ibid., 65.
  32. Ibid., 31. See also Kaplan, "The Famine Plot", 52.
  33. Savary, *Le parfait Négociant*. See, for the subject of France as a commercial Republic also J. Livesey, *The Making of Democracy in the French Revolution* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001).
  34. For the subject of "Colbertism" and its impact on 18th-century French economic policy see P. Minard, "Colbertism Continued? The Inspectorate of Manufactures and Strategies of Exchange in Eighteenth Century France", *French Historical Studies* 23, no. 3 (2000): 477–496; P. Minard, "Économie de marché et État en France: mythes et légendes du colbertisme", *L'Économie politique* 37, no. 1 (2008): 77–94. For the analysis of British commercial knowledge see Leng, "Epistemology", 97–116; as well as William Deringer's forthcoming article on "mercantile epistemology": "It Was Their Business to Know: British Merchants and Mercantile Epistemology in the Eighteenth Century", *History of Political Economy* 49, no. 5 (2017): 177–206. See also Kaplan, *Bread*, 52–96. For the conception of commerce and its changing perception see Kessler, *Revolution*, 16–56.
  35. Herbert, *Essai*, 181.
  36. "Celui qui aura dessein de s'adonner au commerce des grains, ne peut faire aucune spéculation, s'il n'a la liberté entière de disposer de sa marchandise à son gré, & en tout tems. Car tout homme sensé qui calcule, ne peut acheter des bleds, & conserver une marchandise sujette à beaucoup d'accidens, s'il n'envisage qu'il en pourra tirer tous ses frais & même du bénéfices. Or comment pourra-t-il s'en flatter, s'il pense qu'il peut être gêné dans ce dénit; & qu'il ne sera pas maître d'envoyer ses grains au dehors, lorsque cela pourra remplir ses vûes, & convener à ses intérêts?" Ibid., 179–180.
  37. See J. Franklin, *Science of Conjecture: Evidence and Probability Before Pascal* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001), 263. See G. Signori, "Kontingenzbewältigung durch Zukunftshandeln: Der spätmittelalterliche Leibrentenvertrag", in *Ermöglichen und Verhindern: Vom Umgang mit Kontingenz*, ed. M. Bernhardt, S. Brakensiek, and B. Scheller (Frankfurt am Main: Campus Verlag, 2016), 117–142, 120. Giovanni Ceccarelli deals explicitly with life-contingent contracts and the question of usury in Canon law; see G. Ceccarelli, "Risky Business: Theological and Canonical Thought on Insurance from the Thirteenth to the Seventeenth Century", *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 31, no. 3 (2001): 607–858.
  38. N. Luhmann, *Soziologie des Risikos* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1991), 21.
  39. "Chaque Province n'est point un Etat séparé; elles sont toutes les membres du même corps, les enfants d'une même famille. Elles ne peuvent subsister, sans se prêter jurementlement un secours mutuel." Ibid., 102.
  40. F.V.D. de Forbonnais, *Elemens du Commerce: Premiere Partie* (Leiden, 1754).
  41. "Sçavoir faire le commerce ou sçavoir le conduire, sont deux choses très-distinctes: pour le bien conduire il faut sçavoir comment il se fait; pour le faire avec profit, il est inutile de sçavoir comment il doit se conduire. La science du négociant est celle des details dont il s'occupe: . . . Il faut donc les connoître, & ce n'est que par le négociant que l'on peut s'en instruire: on ne sçauroit trop conserver avec eux pour apprendre; pour délibérer, leurs conseils doivent être admis avec précaution." Ibid., 87.
  42. Ibid., 91.
  43. "Le profit seul que présente l'exportation est un appas suffisant pour les spéculations du commerce." Ibid., 123.

44. “Si les sujets eussent formé la même spéculation, non seulement l’inconvénient public d’une balance ruineuse pendant la disette lui eût été épargnée; mais les inconvénients particuliers qui sont une suite, soit du trop bas prix des grains, soit de leur prix excessif, & souvent pour plusieurs années, n’eussent point existé.” Ibid., 152.
45. “Quel profit présentera une spéculation sur des denrées qu’il est défendu de garder jusqu’à ce qu’elle renchérissent?” Ibid., 155. See also Ibid., 375: “Cette concurrence s’animera par les motifs dont nous avons déjà (sic) parlé, & en raison de l’abondance des consommations intérieures qui sont un appas toujours présent pour les spéculations.”
46. F.V.D. de Forbonnais, *Elemens du Commerce: Deuxième Partie* (Leiden, 1766), 183.
47. “Ceux qui font le commerce des grains doivent, si on leur suppose la plus petite intelligence de leur profession, amasser dans leurs magasins, outre ce qu’ils destinent à leur débit journalier, une quantité réservée pour les cas fortuits, jusqu’à ce que les apparences de la récolte suivante les décident. Le risque d’une pareille spéculation est toujours mediocre si les grains ont été achetés à bon compte.” Ibid., 169–170. See also Ibid., 173: “Si nous supposons à présent les greniers remplis dans un temps d’abondance, lorsque le forment seroit à 14 liv. le setier; le bénéfice qu’on en pourroit espérer, avant même que le prix annonçât la défense de l’exportation, seroit de 17%. La spéculation étant évidemment avantageuse, les spéculateurs ne manqueroit point.”
48. Ibid., 143–144.
49. G.-F. Coyer, *La Noblesse commerçante* (London and Paris: Duchesne, 1756).
50. Forbonnais, *Elemens*, 158–159. See, for the English example Ibid., 116.
51. Kaplan, *Bread*, 91.
52. See Ibid., 91–92.
53. Ibid., 91.
54. Ibid., 94.
55. For the problem of imagined dearth see Kaplan, “The Famine Plot”.
56. Abeille, *Lettre d’un Négociant sur la nature du commerce de grain*. In his *Reflexions* of the following year, Abeille also explicitly verbalized his ideas on speculation. See L.-P. Abeille, *Reflexions sur la police des grains en France et en Angleterre, mars 1764* (Paris: [s.n.], 1764).
57. “Ils [les commerçants] apprennent que le blé manque dans un pays; que par conséquent il s’y vend facilement & bon prix; dès ce moment toutes leurs spéculations sont faites; c’est là qu’il faut envoyer du grain, & l’envoyer promptement, afin de profiter du temps où la vente est favorable”, see Abeille, *Lettre*, 7–8.
58. “Il doit donc prévoir que le désir de gagner multipliera les spéculations semblables aux siennes: que par conséquent l’abondance & le bas prix du grain succéderoient vraisemblablement au besoin & au bon prix. Mais il lui reste un motif pour se placer entre les risques de la perte ou du profit; c’est l’espérance de vendre ailleurs à un prix raisonnable une denrée que la concurrence feroit tomber au dessous de sa vraie valeur.” Ibid., 8.
59. “Nous avons déjà vu par quels motifs & comment les spéculations du commerce se dirigent vers les lieux où les récoltes ont été insuffisantes; nous avons expliqué comment la multitude de Spéculateurs, & l’impossibilité du concert entr’eux, opéroit nécessairement des versements de grains toujours supérieurs au besoin. Tout se réduit donc à cet axiome: le commerce cherche les lieux où la merchandise se vend bien.” Ibid., 10–11.
60. Ibid., 11–12.

61. Sophus Reinert shows that John Cary considered trade as a science because it was based on experience. See S. Reinert, *Translating Empires: Emulation and the Origins of Political Economy* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011), 123. Moreover, the concept of commercial emulation built on observation of best practices. For the merchants' interpretative authority in matters commercial and their knowledge based on experience, see also Leng, "Epistemology", 97–116, esp. 100–102.
62. This is contrasted by the "Political Economy of Virtue" that John Shovlin discovered. See Shovlin, *Political Economy*.
63. "Les capitaux & l'activité rendus à la terre, la circulation des grains bien établie de Province à Province dans l'intérieur du Royaume, le ressort de spéculation [sont] rendu à nos Marchands, à nos Laboureurs, par le libre Commerce intérieur." Anonymous, *Lettre à l'Auteur de la Gazette du Commerce: Extrait de la Gazette du 3 Mars 1764: De Paris le 22 Février 1764* (Paris: Chez P. Courtois, 1764).
64. "comment concilier les justes profits d'une spéculation sage, avec des droits si excessifs en eux-mêmes, & qui peuvent être portés au double de ceux sur lesquels on a compté?" See Abeille, *Reflexions*, 20.
65. Ibid., 15.
66. Ibid., 12–13, see also 45–46.
67. Ibid., 22.
68. Ibid., 24–25.
69. Ibid., 34.
70. Ibid., 8.
71. Ibid., 48.
72. "Dans ce moment les Négocians se gardent bien de hazarder pour leur compte l'achat de grains étrangers. Il y auroit tout à parier qu'ils perdroient sur leurs spéculations. Il arrive donc que le Royaume est mal pourvu & à très-grands frais. Mal pourvu, parce que l'état ne fait jamais acheter à beaucoup près une aussi grande quantité de grains qu'en attireroit le concurrence des Commerçans du Royaume. À très-grands frais, parce que les Commissionnaires de l'Etat n'ont aucun intérêt à mettre de l'économie dans leurs achats, à épier les temps & les lieux où ils pourroient les faire avec plus d'avantages. Leur objet principal, & même leur objet unique lorsqu'ils ont l'ame honnête, est de remplir leur mission avec célérité. La qualité des grains, l'économie du prix n'entrent pour rien dans leurs operations." Ibid., 32.
73. "les Négocians n'avoient pu faire de spéculations sur les grains, en sorte qu'ils manquèrent tout-à-coup." Ibid., 34–35.
74. "Ainsi quand même la circulation eût été permise, les spéculations des Négocians ne les eussent pas portés à dégarnir les endroits pourvus de grains pour les envoyer ailleurs. Quand l'allarme, bien ou mal fondée, est répandue partout, le blé ne circule point. Le haut prix, effet prompt & nécessaire de la crainte, les reticent où ils font. Le vrai remède contre ces terreurs, c'est la liberté de l'exportation." Ibid., 37–38.
75. Ibid., 38.
76. Ibid., 47.
77. Ibid., 93–94.
78. Ibid., "Introduction", XXX.
79. See Kaplan, "The Famine Plot", 52–53.
80. Weulersse, *Le Mouvement*, 474, 481–482.
81. A. Smith, *Inquiry Into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations* (New York, NY: Bantam Classic, 2003).
82. For the history of self-organisation in the 18th century as a meta-narrative of the making of modernity see J. Sheehan and D. Wahrmann, *Invisible Hands*:

*Self-Organization and the 18th Century* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2015).

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# 13 From the Civic Improvement of the Jews to the Separation of State and Church

Languages of Political Reform  
in Brandenburg-Prussia,  
1781–1799

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## Introduction

Research on the late eighteenth-century debate over the status of the Jews in Prussia has been unsurprisingly focused on the controversy surrounding Christian Wilhelm Dohm's call for the *civic improvement* of the Jews (*Über die bürgerliche Verbesserung der Juden*, 1781). Dohm's treatise drew a variety of responses from major intellectuals, among them Johann David Michaelis and Moses Mendelssohn; the latter wrote in this context his renowned *Jerusalem, oder: Über religiöse Macht und Judentum* (1783). This chapter attempts to situate the debate of the early 1780s within a larger framework by comparing it to a related discussion of a proposal for confessional union between the Jewish and Protestant communities in Berlin (1799), involving David Friedländer, Wilhelm Abraham Teller, and Friedrich Schleiermacher. This attempt requires an examination of the uneasy interaction between several languages of argumentation concerning the political implications of religious difference: Particularly significant for the comparison of these public debates are changing concepts of the interrelations between state and organised religion as well as different views on the desired remit of state action.

One of my main arguments is that the debate over granting the Jews civic rights cannot be examined in isolation from the issue of the relationship between the state and religious associations in its territories. By and large the extension of full civic rights to the Jews was inextricably linked to changing conceptions of what the civic sphere amounted to, what the duties and rights of citizens were exactly, and how far the government should interfere in the administration of religious affairs or regulate the relationship between different confessions. Moreover, discussion of equal rights for the Jews would not have made much sense within the framework of European feudal and corporate structures before the consolidation of

the state, mostly in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Medieval and many early modern liberties, in the plural, were attached to persons and corporations as so many privileges in various domains; the different laws regulating the affairs of Jewish communities (or forbidding their existence) were part of this cross-European legal tapestry.<sup>1</sup> It is with the concerted efforts to unify and harmonise legal codes, as well as to downgrade the impact of intermediary bodies between sovereign and citizens, that the so-called Jewish Question became increasingly urgent.

The Berlin debates of the late eighteenth century constituted a remarkable exception in Enlightenment Europe. The violent protests against the Jew Bill of 1753 put paid to official British attempts to liberalise its attitude towards the Jews for almost a century. The eventually discarded Jewish Naturalisation Bill did not envisage full civic rights or equal conditions for Jews and Anglicans; it was merely aimed at rendering the legal and civic status of foreign Jews settling in Britain similar to that of Jews already residing there.<sup>2</sup> Beyond a debate over the naturalisation of foreigners in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, in which John Toland and John Locke made brief references to the Jews, the issue of granting Jews full civic rights was not a major concern of Enlightenment authors in England or Scotland. In France the situation was similar; before the Revolution and the debates involving the Abbé Grégoire there was no significant discussion of political rights for local Jews.<sup>3</sup> While the Jewish *nation* was discussed profusely in Enlightenment treatises, especially in relation to its ancient political and moral precepts, Mosaic law, and its primordial links with early Christianity, a strict distinction was usually made between contemporary Jews and their ancient forefathers – the latter commonly referred to as *Israelites*.<sup>4</sup>

I shall attempt to avoid here the common term *Jewish emancipation*, applied traditionally by historians to the struggle for civic rights for the Jews mostly in the nineteenth century. As demonstrated in the 1960s in a meticulous study by Jacob Katz, the term *emancipation* was simply not current in the eighteenth century; according to Katz this controversial term was first applied to the Jews in 1816 before increasingly dominating the semantic field from the late 1820s onwards.<sup>5</sup> Katz also traced a semantic shift from c. 1770 to c. 1820: During this period, *naturalisation* (as employed in the British debates of the early and mid-eighteenth century) was gradually replaced by a plethora of new terms such as *improvement* or *amelioration* (*Verbesserung*), *reform* (*Reformezirung*, *réforme*), *refinement* (*Veredelung*), and *regeneration*. This change of vocabulary paralleled the transition, especially in Prussia, from a discussion of the condition of incoming Jews to a sharper focus on the rights and duties of local communities and the possibility of granting them full civic rights. This chapter aims to re-assess Katz's observations concerning the shifting semantic field while linking it to contemporary discussions of the interrelations between church and state. As we shall see, such discussions

could be tightly linked to debates over the civic role of the Jews – as in the case of Berlin in the early 1780s – or more widely applied to the relationship between the Prussian state and the Protestant denominations in its territories (in the radical suggestions of Humboldt and Schleiermacher throughout the 1790s).

## The Berlin Context

In Brandenburg-Prussia the first major debate over the civic status of the Jews took place in the relatively open public sphere that flourished under Frederick the Great. The king publicly displayed indifference towards religion, discounting personal belief while emphasising the fulfilment of civic duties.<sup>6</sup> Yet while he claimed that service to the state and the payment of taxes mattered more than all varieties of individual belief and communal worship, the Jews in his territories were still subject to exceptional regulations, as common in other parts of the Holy Roman Empire and Europe as a whole.<sup>7</sup> Jews had to apply for special residence permits, usually dependent on special services to the crown (or to be sponsored by so-called *court Jews* already granting such services); even lawful Jewish residents were liable to specific bureaucratic controls and multiple taxes (in cases of marriage, change of domicile, property acquisition, etc.).<sup>8</sup> In addition, and perhaps most palpably, Jews were excluded from landowning, the civil service, and artisans' guilds. In practice, they were restricted to commerce; and since only few could muster the resources required for large-scale enterprises, most Jews had to make a living as peddlers, small-scale retailers, or moneylenders.

By the late eighteenth century, however, several factors combined to make Berlin a particularly suitable locus for the discussion of general civic rights and duties as applied to the Jewish case. First, despite his negative views concerning the Jews, Frederick II set in motion a debate over the interrelations between the sovereign, citizens, and religious institutions. In his public essays he famously redefined his own role as the *first servant of the state*, thereby making a strict conceptual distinction between the monarch and the state (the latter becoming thoroughly impersonalised); he also took the unorthodox step of explicitly basing his authority on contract theory. While espousing the absolute power of the monarch, Frederick traced it back to the people's decision to subjugate themselves and insisted that rulers always owed their population certain duties, whose fulfilment could be a standard for the assessment of good government.<sup>9</sup> In the early 1780s the king initiated the unprecedented procedure of public consultation and debate over an envisaged legal reform and the unification of Prussian law; this move raised contemporary hopes for a major act of constitutional codification which would delimit the government's sphere of action and provide courts with greater independence.<sup>10</sup>

On the ground, while the Prussian capital was home to a small Jewish community, it had a relatively high number of middle-class and wealthier families who endowed their children with general education along Enlightenment lines (acquired at universities or via private tutors). Towards the end of the century the lack of elaborate court culture in Berlin and the absence of a local university (and hence of corporate professorial privileges) enabled an exceptional degree of mutual socialisation between Jewish and Christian intellectuals in the city. The much-discussed cases of the Jewish salonnieres Henriette Herz and Rahel Levin-Varnhagen, in whose homes central authors of the Romantic Movement were entertained, were only the most famous instances of Jewish-Christian interaction in Berlin.<sup>11</sup>

This social phenomenon, facilitating greater intellectual collaboration, was also enabled by the liberal theology of the leading clergymen in Berlin and at the Prussian University of Halle (August Friedrich Wilhelm Sack, Johann Joachim Spalding, Siegmund Jacob Baumgarten, and Wilhelm Abraham Teller, among others). This circle of theologians and senior church officials tended to emphasise the moral aspects of Scripture and to interpret it in a tolerant spirit, opposing cases of what they perceived as excessive enthusiasm (*Schwärmerei*).<sup>12</sup> In this respect, and particularly in the case of Berlin, the distinction between Enlightenment and Romantic theology seems too clear-cut, as we shall see. It is the combination of rationalist (mostly Leibnizian) theological strands, a Pietist-inflected emphasis on unconditional inner belief, and a newer sort of attention to religious sentiment that merged together to create the local version of what Thomas Nipperdey called *Bildungsreligion* in relation to Weimar classicism and its impact on the nineteenth century.<sup>13</sup>

In addition to these socio-political and intellectual factors one must finally bear in mind the unique presence in Berlin of Moses Mendelssohn. Though perhaps less decisive than other, much more wide-ranging historical processes, the staying power of Mendelssohn's legacy and image moulded local debates over the interrelations between Jews and Christians – to the extent that ever since his death in 1786, Mendelssohn has come to symbolise a whole variety of phenomena and processes for self-styled students, followers, admirers, despisers, and allegedly objective chroniclers, Jewish and Christian alike.<sup>14</sup> Whatever we make of these diverse images of Mendelssohn, in no other urban centre of eighteenth-century Europe was there a Jewish author unanimously recognised as a major pillar of the local Enlightenment. Though popularly anointed as *the Socrates of Berlin* following the publication of his *Phädon* in 1767, Mendelssohn had already secured his reputation by publishing philosophical works such as the *Briefe über die Empfindungen* of 1755 (his aesthetic works, composed in German, were more widely received than Alexander Baumgarten's Latin treatises) and by winning the 1763 prize contest of the Berlin Academy on certainty in metaphysics (Immanuel

Kant came in second). Gotthold Ephraim Lessing's long-lasting friendship with Mendelssohn, alongside their common editorial projects and public campaigns, was also a major feature of the Berlin Enlightenment. Mendelssohn himself was never admitted as an official member of the Berlin Academy, even after winning its prestigious prize; nor was he granted the highest residence status in Brandenburg-Prussia despite the respect in which he was held by local civil servants and authors. Late in life, however, he instigated one of the most momentous discussions of Jews' civic rights and duties – the fruit of his collaboration with Christian Wilhelm Dohm, a young civil servant in the Prussian foreign ministry (Dohm was a *Kriegstrat* or ministerial councillor, as well as an archival registrar).

### **What the Jews Can Do for the State (and vice versa): Dohm's Treatise**

In 1779 Mendelssohn asked Dohm to assist him in drafting, on behalf of the Jewish community in Alsace, a response to anti-Jewish incitement. The result, a collaboration between Herz Cerberr (a prominent member of the Alsatian community), Dohm, and Mendelssohn, was the *Mémoire sur l'état des Juifs en Alsace*, where Dohm started developing some of the arguments he would elaborate a year later in his general plea for civic rights for the Jews.<sup>15</sup> This latter work, *Über die bürgerliche Verbesserung der Juden*, was yet another result of the ongoing intellectual exchange between Dohm, Mendelssohn, and their publisher, Friedrich Nicolai.<sup>16</sup>

Dohm's treatise epitomised an Enlightenment discourse on the universality of human nature, applied to the case of the Jews. While seeing contemporary Jews as morally degraded in comparison to other communities – and hence in need of *civic improvement* – Dohm argued they were capable of becoming fully fledged citizens on a par with their Christian compatriots. A novelty against the background of medieval and early modern treatises by Christians about Jews was the perspective from which Dohm's essay was written: It examined the situation of the Jews and made its arguments on political grounds, with the state and the common good as its explicit and exclusive guidelines. Employing the tone of a dispassionate civil servant, Dohm relegated theological issues to the (sometimes literal) margins of his dissertation. He did try to counter anti-Jewish arguments and prejudices, mostly coloured by age-old confessional disputes, and to present an image of Judaism as a religion like all others: ostensibly exclusive in its claims for the truth of its own revelation while historically moulded and internally focused on ethics. Yet his recurrent strategy was to argue that theological assertions concerning Jewish communal traits, from Christ's crucifixion to rabbinical scholarly malpractice, did not matter at all where civic rights were at stake, even if they had all been true (which he did not believe). By shifting the focus of the debate from traditional theological topoi to political and economic

theory, Dohm sought to cut the Gordian knot that had tied up most earlier discussions of Jewish rights. For him, any confessional mode of argumentation was clearly obsolete within the political sphere.<sup>17</sup>

The earlier term *naturalisation* does not feature in Dohm's treatise; the *improvement* of the title is closely linked to the perfection ethics so common in pre-Kantian German philosophy. It was exemplarily expressed in Christian Wolff's primary natural law concerning morals: "Do whatever makes you, your condition, and that of others more perfect; do not do what renders it more imperfect."<sup>18</sup> This trend can be discerned in the debate over the determination of man (*die Bestimmung des Menschen*) from the 1740s to the 1790s, as well as in works by the Berlin liberal theologians, from Johann Joachim Spalding's bestselling treatise *Betrachtung über die Bestimmung des Menschen* (1748) to a much later treatise by Wilhelm Abraham Teller, whom we shall encounter below, under the title *Die Religion der Vollkommenen* (1792).<sup>19</sup> Moreover, while *improvement* or ongoing perfection is connected in Dohm's title by the genitive to the Jews, it is also modified by the adjective *civic*. Dohm was not after any sort of spiritual or theological betterment and he did not see it as the business of the modern state. In his eyes, by the very act of politically *improving* the condition of the Jews (and thereby prompting their own self-improvement), the civic community might perfect or improve itself.

Using the Cameralist and physiocratic belief that the riches of large territorial states depended on the size of their population, Dohm argued that the state considerably damaged itself by excluding the Jews from most occupations – and especially from work as artisans and farmers. Referring to the universality of human nature, he argued that Jews had the potential of becoming the most patriotic and loyal citizens due to the gratitude they would naturally feel towards a beneficent state that did away with all traditional restrictions concerning employment and civic functions. As long as the Jews were legally and officially discriminated against, Dohm complemented his argument, the state could expect in return nothing but despair, indifference, and even hatred fostered by socio-political exclusion, derision, and contempt.

The argument was, therefore, not solely concerned with political economy, although Dohm warmly recommended opening up much wider avenues of employment to the Jews (while also making them use the German language and serve in the Prussian army – which he regarded as a major school of citizenship). Underlying Dohm's treatise was the utter subordination of theology to politics in the modern state as well as an unwavering rejection of any essentialist claims about unchanging features of social and religious groups. Such traits were always and everywhere linked, Dohm argued, to physical and historical-political factors.<sup>20</sup> He famously claimed that the adversaries of the Jews mistook the effects of persecution (civic degradation) for its causes and squarely blamed Christian governments for the unsavoury conditions in which

most Jewish communities in Europe found themselves as a result of traditional policies. Here Dohm went well beyond previous arguments for the improvement of the legal situation of European Jews, which had referred to the beneficial aspects of Jewish commercial skills and financial activities. He was fully aware of the consequences of advocating Jewish rights in commercial terms, which could actually reinforce age-old theological prejudices instead of diminishing them.<sup>21</sup>

One of the main problems, according to Dohm, was the link made by governments between religious belief and civic capacities or entitlement. All residents of the state should enjoy full civic rights (and be required to fulfil the whole range of civic duties) as long as it has not been proven that their religion was detrimental to civic peace or harmed fellow citizens. Since all religions contained some exclusive tenets concerning revelation or salvation, thereby creating a division (*Trennung*) in civil society, the state could not use such beliefs as a ground for depriving their members of civil rights. For otherwise the state must tolerate only a single religion or none at all; both options, Dohm suggested, were as impractical as they were detrimental to common good.<sup>22</sup> Here one may perceive echoes of the traditional religious politics of Brandenburg-Prussia, whose Calvinist ruling dynasty governed a largely Lutheran country and to which the Silesian Wars of the 1740s added substantial Catholic and Jewish minorities.

Dohm likened the existence of multiple confessions in a single territory to the sprawling division of labour in the modern state. Unlike Enlightenment critics of this feature of modernity (from Rousseau and Winckelmann to Schiller), who lamented the loss of an all-rounded personality they usually identified with Greek antiquity, Dohm celebrated the division of labour as an indisputable and even desirable element of contemporary life and politics. In this respect, he argued, any modern regime had to mitigate the exclusive and autonomous features of different guilds, classes, associations, and confessions. The task was to channel such inevitable differences and communal pride into politically beneficial striving and competition by prompting patriotism and full awareness of the shared civic sphere.

The government should allow any of these special associations their own pride, even their not-too-detrimental prejudices. But it has to strive to instill in each member-group more love for the state; and it has fulfilled its purpose only when the aristocrat, the peasant, the scholar, the manual worker, the Christian and the Jew is a *citizen* to a greater extent than his other identities.<sup>23</sup>

This seemingly neutral description of the centripetal role of the state, countering the centrifugal tendencies of various associations and professions, was a bold move on two different fronts. Not only did it reduce

religious belief to the level of membership in a corporate body and equated deep theological fault lines with prosaic occupational differences. It also implied a sharp theoretical attack on the society of orders (*Ständestaat*), heralding a conception of common citizenry that shared equal rights and duties. As could be expected from a civil servant, Dohm's political vision had the state at its very centre: the state – rather than any intermediary body – was to afford rights, demand the fulfilment of duties, and constantly assess the potentially beneficial or detrimental aspects of different confessions and associations. The emphatic focus here, and the basis for granting civic rights, was the wellbeing of the state (*das Wohl des Staates*) rather than that of individual citizens. Individual welfare was largely a means to furthering national wellbeing as it would necessarily benefit from such general *improvement*. Indeed, one of the most far-reaching aspects of Dohm's treatise, his support of the maintenance of autonomy by Jewish communities, was part and parcel of his statist outlook.<sup>24</sup> Throughout the treatise Dohm usually referred to the Jews in the plural, envisioning the self-improvement that their equal treatment as a group or an association would usher in. Although this suggestion may be regarded as a laudable contrast to later assimilationist policies ("everything to the Jews as individuals, nothing to the Jews as a community"), it is worth bearing in mind the utmost significance as well as the theoretical priority of the state in Dohm's political thought.

### Control at a Distance: Mendelssohn on the State, Religion, and Excommunication

The extent of Jewish autonomy was one of Moses Mendelssohn's rare points of disagreement with Dohm, which he placed at the centre of two of his own contributions to the ensuing public debate in Berlin. Mendelssohn had, of course, only praise for Dohm's suggestion that the Jews should continue to regulate their communal life according to rabbinic law as long as the latter did not contradict the local legal code. However, he begged to differ on the extent of the power enjoyed by religious leaders. While Dohm thought the rabbis should be able to excommunicate members of their communities without detriment to the civic sphere, Mendelssohn wished to prohibit the exercise of any sort of religious ban. This point was initially made in 1782 in Mendelssohn's introduction to a German translation of Manasseh ben Israel's seventeenth-century plea for the re-admission of the Jews to England, which he presented as a supplement to Dohm's treatise of the previous year.<sup>25</sup> In 1783 it was further elaborated in the first part of Mendelssohn's fullest treatise of political theory, his *Jerusalem, oder: Über religiöse Macht und Judentum* (*Jerusalem, or: On Religious Power and Judaism*, 1783).

Mendelssohn insisted that neither church nor state possessed any right to interfere in matters of conscience and belief. Bans, sanctions, rewards,

and punishments belonged to the civil sphere, while religious faith was a matter of personal conviction that should not be relevant to the civil status of the adherents of various confessions. Therefore, he launched a decisive attack on the self-arrogation of earthly rewards and punishments by established religions, including Judaism. In 1782 Mendelssohn argued that even ancient Judaism could not have included the right of ban or exclusion (*cherem*).<sup>26</sup> The eventual publication of *Jerusalem* in 1783 was prompted by an anonymous pamphlet claiming that by denying his own religion the right to banish heretics Mendelssohn had departed from one of its time-honoured principles.<sup>27</sup> In refuting this view Mendelssohn adopted a twofold strategy. In the broader philosophical arena he wished to demonstrate that no social contract could have endowed religious institutions with the right to property and the exercise of coercive measures. This argument was linked to Mendelssohn's view that rights over persons and goods did not depend on beliefs and opinions, only on public conduct. On a more specific level, Mendelssohn argued that earthly penalties or rewards were never linked in ancient Judaism to belief and doctrine.

The general argument against the coercive powers of any religious association was based on a distinction between complete (*vollkommen*) and incomplete (*unvollkommen*) rights and duties.<sup>28</sup> In the state of nature all duties and rights were merely incomplete or imperfect: No one had enforceable or complete rights to others' benevolence or any similar duty to help them. Only rights and duties of omission, such as not injuring one's peers and preventing others from injuring oneself, were complete in the state of nature. Natural freedom or independence amounted to the absence of any positive obligation to anyone and merely incomplete duties (or rights) of persons to settle cases of collision between their own and others' claims to resources or benevolence.

For Mendelssohn natural freedom meant incomplete social duties, not the instinctive pursuit of self-interest. Within this framework a social compact – which Mendelssohn saw not as an irrevocable past conjecture but rather an incessant, never-ending contracting of social duties and rights – could only transform the incomplete duties existing in the state of nature into complete duties, enforceable and coercible within civil society. This point is crucial for Mendelssohn's argument about religious associations. Human beings could settle the collision of their incomplete rights and duties towards one another by agreements and contracts, but this was not applicable to the relationship between them and God. God did not require human assistance, nor did he possess incomplete rights in conflict with those of human beings; in this case there could have been no contract at all. Where no incomplete duties or rights had existed, Mendelssohn argued, complete duties and rights could not have been produced *ex nihilo* by a social contract. Civil society (or the state) could lay claim to complete rights over its members, based on the same members'

incomplete natural duties towards one another. Established religion, by contrast, could have never acquired any complete rights enforceable by violence, penalties, or remuneration. The only tool in its arsenal was persuasion through reason and compassion.<sup>29</sup>

The second part of *Jerusalem* applied this argument specifically to Judaism. Mendelssohn's main point was that the faith of his forefathers was perfectly compatible with contemporary views of the tenets of natural religion (the existence of God, providence, and the immortality of the soul) usually regarded as universally accessible to all human beings. The revelation at Sinai contained, according to Mendelssohn, only ceremonial law or particular precepts for everyday action, not propositions necessary for salvation and happiness. God gave the ancient Jews historical truths – facts and events that must be taken on faith – rather than eternal truths universally accessible to reason.<sup>30</sup> Therefore, the sanctions attached to the revealed law never addressed matters of belief, only ceremonial actions. Such punitive measures were necessary as long as God was the lawgiver and king of the Hebrew nation; once the civil bonds of the state were dissolved by foreign occupation, religious transgressions ceased to be crimes against the state and Judaism was transformed from a theocracy into a religion.<sup>31</sup>

On this basis Mendelssohn also opposed all proposals for the union of different faiths. This was not a case of toleration, he explained, but rather its opposite: Instead of respecting others as they were, one wished to reduce to a minimum all the differences between the others and oneself. For Mendelssohn initiatives for the unification of different confessions, based on the smallest common denominator, were also detrimental to the freedom of conscience. He saw the new religious formulae as empty words, for believers from each camp would ascribe different meanings to them according to their customary ways.

On the other hand, Mendelssohn also attacked earlier calls for the separation of religion and the state. For Mendelssohn both the state and religious associations must care about human happiness in this life and the next by promoting the further perfection of their members (among other means, through public education). However, neither church nor state could coerce human conviction. Drawing on early modern Erastian theory, Mendelssohn refused to let religious congregations act absolutely freely within the state, fearing their claim for mastery over human salvation – which some early modern Catholic theorists (like Robert Bellarmine) interpreted as endowing the Catholic Church with temporal rights and possessions. The state should, therefore, maintain a supervisory role *at a distance* in relation to all religious associations, ensuring they did not propagate anti-social theories or infringed on citizens' conscience.

Mendelssohn's conferral of this supervisory role on the state, or his view of the sovereign as an arbiter and peacekeeper in the religious realm, was indebted – as in the case of various predecessors – to the horrors

of more than two hundred years of religious warfare in Europe. Mendelssohn did not, however, go as far as Hobbes, for he explicitly ruled out any involvement of the sovereign in the determination of the content of confessional dogma. Yet one may certainly detect a certain aversion in Mendelssohn to the completely unsupervised interplay of religious associations within the state. This stance could have been prompted by the reasonable concern that the larger confessions – if permitted absolutely free rein in the public sphere – would abuse it to the detriment of smaller religious associations, perhaps even forcing the hand of the state by mobilising public opinion in their own favour – as in the case of the riots surrounding discussions of the 1753 Jew Bill in Britain.

### No Control, Even at a Distance: Humboldt's *Ideen*

Wilhelm von Humboldt, who was tutored by central authors of the Berlin Enlightenment and knew Mendelssohn's work, did not share these fears. In his early work *Ideen zu einem Versuch, die Grenzen der Wirksamkeit des Staates zu bestimmen*, his position on this matter could not have been clearer.

Hence, then, without adducing any further reasons, I may proceed to lay down the principle, by no means a novel one, *that all that concerns religion lies beyond the sphere of the state's activity; and that the choice of ministers, as well as all that relates to religious worship in general, should be left to the free judgement of the communities concerned, without any special supervision on the part of the state.*<sup>32</sup>

The argument preceding this decisive conclusion is, however, much more nuanced. Humboldt argued in contrast to most of his predecessors, including Dohm and Mendelssohn, that although religion might promote moral behaviour, there is no necessary link between morality and religious belief. In the late seventeenth century a version of this idea had been floated by Pierre Bayle, who claimed that a society of atheists could be just as moral as one comprised of sincere believers. This argument was criticised across Europe as especially radical; even John Locke's principles of toleration did not extend to atheists. On this point Mendelssohn was in full agreement with Locke, claiming that consistent atheists would be perfect egoists. Humboldt, however, argued from the more recent platform of Kantian ethics and its view of autonomous individuals as morally self-legislating, thereby learning to regard themselves as members in a *kingdom of ends*. Seen from this vantage point morality and self-perfection were distinct from any particular religious dogmas, even if they could sometimes be aided by some perception of divine order and purpose in the diversity of worldly phenomena.

The difference between Mendelssohn and Humboldt on this front might be linked to their respective backgrounds, beyond the generational gap.

Mendelssohn wrote in 1783, under Frederick II, following forty years of relatively restrained action of the Prussian state in the religious sphere. Humboldt's *Ideen*, written in 1792, followed both Johann Christoph von Wöllner's controversial *Religionsedikt* of 1788 and the new French legislation concerning freedom of conscience and belief. Humboldt provided a general outline of the development of religion and morality, noting that in ancient states religion was part and parcel of the political constitution and used actively by the state for civic purposes. Over time, with the gradual attainment of *spiritual culture* (*geistige Kultur*), the complexity of moral sentiments increased and so did human self-perfection. Religion was therefore no longer a necessary means for fostering moral behaviour and public security. Civil law could achieve that much more efficiently, in Humboldt's eyes, while freedom of inquiry and belief produced self-reliant and morally robust citizens. Though Humboldt did not explicitly mention recent developments in France, it seems clear that the French separation of the state from religion served as a major example of the latest expansion of *spiritual culture*. His decisive call for the state to abdicate its role as a religious arbiter was made, after all, only a few months after the Jews of France were granted full civic rights. The chapter in the *Ideen* on religion and the state was, moreover, based on an earlier essay from 1789, *Ueber Religion*, published in the wake of the first phase of the Revolution; despite Humboldt's qualms about the French constitution of 1791, he passionately endorsed its guarantees of the freedom of thought and belief.

### No Civic Bribery by the State: Schleiermacher and the Debate Over Jewish Baptism

The increasing realisation that the state did not necessarily have to supervise the religious sphere became increasingly manifest by the end of the 1790s. The young Friedrich Schleiermacher, for example, referred to France in 1799 when he noted that the civic emancipation of the Jews proceeded swiftly and without problem in states beyond Prussia, "especially those which have ceased to be Christian" (*in denen, welche aufgehört haben christliche zu sein*).<sup>33</sup> Notwithstanding the inaccurate account of the French case, which was accompanied by violent riots against the Jews, Schleiermacher recommended a similar course of action to the governments of states which had not *ceased to be Christian* and especially to the Prussian government.

This recommendation was made in the context of a peculiar debate over Jewish-Protestant confessional union. In March and April 1799 two anonymous pamphlets were published in Berlin by Jewish authors: the first, *Politisch-theologische Aufgabe über die Behandlung der jüdischen Täuflinge*, was an ironic criticism of the unequal civic treatment of Jews and Christians who socialised in the same salons and shared all cultural interests. The anonymous authors pointed out the absurdity in a baptism

that, like a magic wand, supposedly erased the innate moral corruption of the Jews, rendering them eligible to all civil rights – despite the fact that nothing has actually changed in the moral, cultural, and personal profile of the baptised. What was then the value of a baptism that is undertaken merely in pursuit of civil rights? Should the state continue to encourage this insincere act of conversion, usually conducted without any inner conviction? Even if the state did not wish to recruit dissimulating converts, it implicitly did so by offering them the full gamut of civic rights – and literally overnight. The authors then raised the following questions:

How would it be if the entire Jewish nation all at once made the decision to be baptized? Would the state possibly act wisely, if it incorporated those hundred thousands, who according to the previous assumption would be useless and probably even harmful, immediately after they completed the ceremony? Would it act wisely if, ignoring all their previous incapacities, it bestowed on them all rights and freedoms? . . . Or might it be more likely for the state to believe it could gloss over this purposeless waste by thinking that by virtue of an incomprehensible supernatural influence, through the mere act of baptism, all these persons would undergo a complete transformation that extends to their innermost being? That all at once their muscles would receive more strength, their head and their heart, their decency and morality, their convictions and inclinations, a more favorable turn toward the fulfillment of civil duties?<sup>34</sup>

The related pamphlet was entitled *Sendschreiben an Probst Teller zu Berlin, von einigen Hausvätern jüdischer Religion*. Anonymously published, it was later revealed to have been written by David Friedländer, one of the respected leaders of the local Jewish community.<sup>35</sup> The tone of his letter was very different from the bitter irony of the *Politisch-theologische Aufgabe*. Here was a much more heartfelt letter, clearly expressing the depressing condition of educated, middle-class Jews in contemporary Berlin. Their cultural assimilation into, and intermingling with, the German intelligentsia had not been followed by any improvement of their civic status. Friedländer made a long theological argument for the superfluity of the ceremonial law in Judaism, pointing out how similar the core doctrines of Judaism and Protestant Christianity actually were. Finally, he proposed the Jews abandon their distinctive ceremonial law and join the Church, formally performing the Protestant ceremonies as a condition for citizenship. However, they should be granted the freedom of conscience and belief and be allowed to interpret differently some dogmas of the Church (for example, Christ as the son of God). This, Friedländer suggested, would benefit both Jews and Protestants in Prussia; it would end unjust discrimination and (resorting

to Dohm's main line of argumentation) provide the state with loyal, productive citizens.

The addressee of Friedländer's *Sendschreiben*, Wilhelm Abraham Teller, answered in the same vein, praising his Jewish colleagues for their enlightened views on both Judaism and Christianity. Yet flattered as he was by Friedländer's depiction of the Prussian church as a bastion of Enlightenment, Teller could not readily accept his correspondent's proposal.<sup>36</sup> As a member of the Prussian consistory, he did not approve of Friedländer's suggestion of a rather half-hearted conversion, or the meeting of Judaism and Protestantism at some middle point without an acknowledgement of Christ's role. Teller asked the authors (the *Sendschreiben* had been allegedly written by a group of householders) to recognise publicly that Christ, sent by God, was the founder of the better moral religion. At the same time he welcomed the proposal as a first step towards the anticipated conversion of all Jews as a sign of Christ's second coming.

Schleiermacher's response was different in both style and content. The much younger theologian, at this stage without an official role in the church and critical of many of his elders, gave up on niceties and mutual respect. He was not amused by the *Sendschreiben*, seeing it as a duplicitous document aimed at the ruin of Christianity. ("Indeed, a judaizing Christianity would be the true disease against which we should inoculate ourselves!")<sup>37</sup> Yet is this comment, as well as the general style of Schleiermacher's response, proto-anti-Semitic in rejecting any possibility of Christian-Jewish coexistence? On a closer reading, especially of the second half of his *Briefe bei Gelegenheit der politisch-theologischen Aufgabe und des Sendschreibens jüdischer Hausväter*, the picture changes. Despite his apparent lack of respect, Schleiermacher was deeply concerned by the fate of both Christianity and Judaism if a compromise along the lines of Friedländer's proposal were to be found. The Jews might become excellent citizens, Schleiermacher argued, but none of them would be a good Christian. They would bring into Protestantism various convictions very different from its core dogmas; whoever genuinely believed in a certain religion would find it impossible to subscribe to another. This is the crux of Schleiermacher's reply: He was first and foremost a defender of genuine religious belief, free from external prompting, rewards, or sanctions. As Schleiermacher wrote to his imagined addressee, it was not only the Jews that he wished to see excluded from the church, but also the vast majority of Christians, who merely performed their duties perfunctorily or were prompted to do so by the social benefits tied to membership in the national church.<sup>38</sup>

Indeed, Schleiermacher's main objection to Friedländer's proposal was that the new members of the church would not subscribe wholeheartedly to *any* religion at all. Some might convert only in order to attain the accompanying civic rights; others would perhaps recognise the tenets of natural religion while holding on to Jewish beliefs; and many of the

new converts would actually be secret Kantians, prescribing their moral law to themselves with no need for religious rules of conduct. (Schleiermacher claimed that one out of every three or four Jewish householders, especially the young and the educated, was a convinced Kantian.)<sup>39</sup> Therefore, the damage incurred by the church would not stem from the Jewishness of the new converts per se, but from their lack of religious conviction in general. The young theologian encouraged the state to abolish the link between civil rights and Prussian Protestantism: The church should officially announce it had nothing at all against granting the Jews full civil liberties, the better to eliminate political incentives for insincere religious conversion (a point made by the authors of the first anonymous letter, the *Politisch-theologische Aufgabe*). Once the links between religion and civic rights had been severed, the church would be free from any suspicion that it secretly collaborated with the state in offering the Jews a bribe for conversion.

Schleiermacher went on to add a few conditions for full Jewish citizenship, such as giving up the belief that the Messiah would reconstitute the Jews as an independent political nation and creating a new association within Judaism (similar to what would later become Reform Judaism). Yet the core of his argument shared some surprising similarities with Mendelssohn and Humboldt. Like Mendelssohn, Schleiermacher did not believe in the efficacy of projects for confessional union, seeing them as cold compromises bereft of any genuine interest for true believers. As Mendelssohn claimed, the catechisms of such unions would be empty words and satisfy none of the parties. The church had better tolerate the Jews as they were, even if it found some of their doctrines abhorrent, rather than require them to become half-hearted Christians or, in practice, non-believers: formal members of a religious association without a sincere personal conviction.

On the other hand, unlike Dohm and Mendelssohn's wish to maintain state supervision of religious institutions (even if at a distance), the young Schleiermacher preferred the complete separation of church and state. Here he was closer to Humboldt's view that civic morality or public security should have nothing to do with established religion. Schleiermacher made this point, however, not from the perspective of a Prussian civil servant but from that of a Protestant theologian. In a sense, he argued that Humboldt's views on the separation of church and state should be in the interest of the church itself: By abolishing the glittering reward of civic rights attached by the state to membership of one of the Christian confessions, the church would rid itself of non-believers or pretending believers – Jewish and Christian alike.

## Conclusion

The granting of full civic rights to the Jews was, as we have seen, inextricably linked to broader contemporary debates on the delineation of

the proper limits of state and church. For Dohm and Mendelssohn, writing in the early 1780s, the state possessed a clear responsibility to promote the moral wellbeing of its citizens – even if it had to fulfil this duty in a restrained manner and at a distance. While it had no purchase on personal conscience and the content of religious dogma, the state – in Dohm and Mendelssohn's eyes – was the ultimate regulator of interrelations among individual citizens as well as between religious associations. Humboldt and Schleiermacher belonged to a different generation, which is usually portrayed as abruptly parting ways with earlier Cameralist or Wolffian doctrines of paternalist politics. It cannot be denied that both Humboldt and Schleiermacher did not envisage in the 1790s any role for the state in the regulation of religious life or that they called for the abolition of the bonds tying civic rights to religious beliefs. Yet the latter point – the irrelevance of confessional dogma to civic behaviour – had also been made by Dohm and Mendelssohn; and the differences between the theoretical outlooks of the early 1780s and the late 1790s should not be solely attributed to a sudden shift of philosophical paradigms in the wake of Kant's critical philosophy.

This transition may also be ascribed to local contexts such as the change of regime and official ideology in Brandenburg-Prussia, the death of Moses Mendelssohn, and the rise of a new generation of Jewish interlocutors or the impact of the French Revolution and its reluctant granting of civil rights to French and Italian Jews. This conceptual change, for whatever reasons, was accompanied by a thorough shift of argumentative language. The *improvement* and *reform* of the Jews for the benefit of the state were no longer the order of the day; civic rights (*Bürgerrechte*) and equality (*Gleichstellung*) for the Jews as they were, with all their alleged faults, replaced the vocabulary of the early 1780s before being superseded in turn by the term *emancipation* in the late 1820s. Unlike most similar discussions in the eighteenth century, where reforms of the condition of the Jews were usually proposed and debated by Christians, in the Berlin case Jewish authors did possess a voice of their own.<sup>40</sup> This is not to suggest that anti-Semitism was not present in late eighteenth-century Prussia, nor that the socio-political situation of the Jews in Prussia dramatically improved following these debates.<sup>41</sup> Even so, the local intellectual scene in Berlin was more open and malleable in this respect than elsewhere in contemporary Europe.

## Notes

1. Cf. A. Funkenstein, "The Political Theory of Jewish Emancipation from Mendelssohn to Herzl", in *Deutsche Aufklärung und Judenemanzipation*, ed. W. Grab (Tel Aviv: Tel Aviv University, 1980), 13–28.
2. On the Jew Bill, see T.W. Perry, *Public Opinion, Propaganda, and Politics in Eighteenth-Century England* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1974); J. Champion, "Toleration and Citizenship in Enlightenment England:

- John Toland and the Naturalization of the Jews, 1714–1753”, in *Toleration in Enlightenment Europe*, ed. O.P. Grell and R. Porter (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 133–156.
3. On the Revolutionary debates, see recently A.G. Sepinwall, *The Abbé Grégoire and the French Revolution: The Making of Modern Universalism* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2005). On the place of the Jews in French eighteenth-century thought, see A. Herzberg, *The French Enlightenment and the Jews: The Origins of Modern Anti-Semitism* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1968); H. Chisick, “Ethics and History in Voltaire’s Attitude Toward the Jews”, *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 35, no. 4 (2002): 577–600; R. Schechter, *Obstinate Hebrews: Representations of Jews in France, 1715–1815* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2003); A. Sutcliffe, *Judaism and Enlightenment* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 231–246.
  4. See, for example, the emphatic distinction made by the Göttingen orientalist Johann David Michaelis: “Juden und Israeliten ist ja nicht völlig einerley. Doch ohne über den Nahmen zu streiten! es ist eine solche Abwechselung von Glück und Cultur unter den Völkern, daß der jetzt verächtliche Nahme, Jüdisch, sehr unglücklich auf Israeliten vor 2500 oder 3000 Jahren angewandt wird, von deren Cultur wir solche Denkmäler, als das Buch Hiob und die Psalmen, übrig haben.” (*Orientalische und exegetische Bibliothek*, Vol. 3 (1772), 68). See also J.D. Michaelis, *Mosaisches Recht*, 3rd ed. (Frankfurt am Main: Johann Gottlieb Garbe, 1793), 1:§18, 58–59. Cf. A. Lifschitz, *Language and Enlightenment: The Berlin Debates of the Eighteenth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 109–113. On European interest in the political outlook of the ancient Jewish state, see recently E. Nelson, *The Hebrew Republic: Jewish Sources and the Transformation of European Political Thought* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010).
  5. J. Katz, “The Term ‘Jewish Emancipation’: Its Origin and Historical Impact”, in *Emancipation and Assimilation: Studies in Modern Jewish History* (Westmead: Gregg International Publishers, 1972), 21–46.
  6. On Frederick II’s critical views of Christianity and organised religion more generally, see A. Lifschitz, “Adrastus Versus Diogenes: Frederick the Great and Jean-Jacques Rousseau on Self-Love”, in *Engaging With Rousseau: Reaction and Interpretation From the Eighteenth Century to the Present* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 17–32, and the introduction in Frederick II of Prussia, *Writings of a Philosopher-King*, ed. A. Lifschitz, trans. A. Scholar (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, forthcoming).
  7. On Frederick’s prejudices concerning Jews (and especially the biblical Hebrews), see most recently T. Blanning, *Frederick the Great: King of Prussia* (New York, NY: Random House, 2016), 409–432.
  8. J. Katz, *Out of the Ghetto: The Social Background of Jewish Emancipation, 1770–1870* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1973); D. Sorkin, *The Transformation of German Jewry, 1780–1840* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990). More specifically on Berlin: D. Hertz, *Jewish High Society in Old Regime Berlin* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1988); and D. Hertz, *How Jews Became Germans: The History of Conversion and Assimilation in Berlin* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2007); S.M. Lowenstein, *The Berlin Jewish Community: Enlightenment, Family and Crisis, 1770–1830* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994); S. Feiner and N. Naimark-Goldberg, *Cultural Revolution in Berlin: Jews in the Age of Enlightenment* (Oxford: Bodleian Library, 2011); N. Naimark-Goldberg, *Jewish Women in Enlightenment Berlin* (London: Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2013).

9. Frederick II of Prussia, “Essai sur les formes de gouvernement et sur les devoirs des souverains”, in *Oeuvres de Frédéric Le Grand*, ed. J.D.E. Preuss (Berlin: Decker, 1848), 9:221–240.
10. On the prominence of Prussian civil servants in debates on (and plans for) Jewish *improvement*, see G. Heinrich, “Preußische Beamte als Träger von Aufklärung: Dohm, Diez, Goßler und Schuckmann zur Judenfrage”, in *Französische Kultur – Aufklärung in Preußen*, ed. M. Fontius and J. Mondot (Berlin: Berlin Verlag, 2001), 101–110.
11. For a reconstruction of this wider range of intellectual collaboration beyond the renowned friendship between Gotthold Ephraim Lessing and Moses Mendelssohn, see C. Wiedemann and A. Lifschitz, eds., *Jüdische und christliche Intellektuelle in Berlin 1800: Freundschaften, Partnerschaften, Feindschaften* (forthcoming).
12. See M. Schloemann, *Siegmund Jacob Baumgarten: System und Geschichte in der Theologie des Überganges zum Neuprotestantismus* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1974); M. Pockrandt, *Biblische Aufklärung: Biographie und Theologie der Berliner Hofprediger August Friedrich Wilhelm Sack (1703–1786) und Friedrich Samuel Gottfried Sack (1738–1817)* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2003); A. Beutel, *Johann Joachim Spalding: Meistertheologe im Zeitalter der Aufklärung* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2014); G. Hornig, *Johann Salomo Semler: Studien zu Leben und Werk des Hallenser Aufklärungstheologen* (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1996); and M. Schröter, *Aufklärung durch Historisierung: Johann Salomo Semlers Hermeneutik des Christentums* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2012). More generally, see K. Aner, *Die Theologie der Lessingzeit* (Halle: Niemeyer, 1929); and A. Beutel, *Kirchengeschichte im Zeitalter der Aufklärung* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2009).
13. T. Nipperdey, *Deutsche Geschichte 1800–1866: Bürgerwelt und starker Staat* (Munich: Beck, 1987), 403–406, 440–442.
14. Among many other items, see D. Sorkin, “The Mendelssohn Myth and Its Method”, *New German Critique* 77 (1999): 7–28 and A. Arkush, “The Questionable Judaism of Moses Mendelssohn”, *New German Critique* 77 (1999): 29–44. For a critique of Heinrich Heine’s view of Mensdelsssohn as a Jewish Luther, see A. Lifschitz, “A Natural Yet Providential Tongue: Moses Mendelssohn on Hebrew as a Language of Action”, in *Language as Bridge and Border: Linguistic, Cultural and Political Constellations in Eighteenth- to Twentieth-Century German-Jewish Thought*, ed. S. Sander (Berlin: Henrich & Henrich, 2015), 31–50. The most detailed biographies are A. Altmann, *Moses Mendelssohn: A Biographical Study* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1973); and D. Bourel, *Moses Mendelssohn: La naissance du judaïsme moderne* (Paris: Gallimard, 2004).
15. This was a reply to F. Hell, *Observations d’un Alsacien sur l’affaire présente des Juifs d’Alsace* (Frankfurt am Main, 1779).
16. Cf. Altmann, *Biographical Study*, 449–474. On Nicolai and his Jewish interlocutors, see S. Stockhorst, “Jüdische Intellektuelle im Spiegel von Friedrich Nicolais *Allgemeiner deutscher Bibliothek* am Beispiel der Rezensionen über Moses Mendelssohn und Marcus Herz”, in *Jüdische und christliche Intellektuelle in Berlin 1800: Freundschaften, Partnerschaften, Feindschaften*, ed. C. Wiedemann and A. Lifschitz (forthcoming).
17. “Alles, was man den Juden vorwirft, ist durch die politische Verfassung, in der sie jetzt leben, bewirkt, und jede andre Menschengattung, in dieselben Umstände versetzt, würde sich sicher eben derselben Vergehen schuldig machen.” (C.W. Dohm, *Über die bürgerliche Verbesserung der Juden*, ed. W.C. Seifert (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2015), 1:25).

18. C. Wolff, "Vernünftige Gedancken von der Menschen Thun und Lassen (Deutsche Ethik)", in *Gesammelte Werke*, ed. C. Wolff (Hildesheim: Olms, 1976), 4:11–14.
19. J.J. Spalding, *Betrachtung über die Bestimmung des Menschen* (Greifswald: Weitbrecht, 1748); W.A. Teller, *Die Religion der Vollkommenen von D. Wilhelm Abraham Teller als Beylage zu desselben Wörterbuch und Beytrag zur reinen Philosophie des Christenthums* (Berlin: Mylius, 1792). On the *Bestimmung des Menschen* debate, see H. Adler, "Die Bestimmung des Menschen: Johann Joachim Spaldings Schrift als Ausgangspunkt einer offenen Anthropologie", *Das achtzehnte Jahrhundert* 18, no. 2 (1994): 125–137; F. Jannidis, "Die 'Bestimmung des Menschen': Kultursemiotische Beschreibung einer sprachlichen Formel", *Aufklärung* 14 (2002): 75–95; C. Tippmann, *Die Bestimmung des Menschen bei Johann Joachim Spalding* (Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 2012); M. Printy, "The Determination of Man: Johann Joachim Spalding and the Protestant Enlightenment", *Journal of the History of Ideas* 74, no. 2 (2013): 189–212; A.L. Macor, *Die Bestimmung des Menschen (1748–1800): Eine Begriffsgeschichte* (Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt: Frommann-Holzboog, 2013); A. Lifschitz, "Genesis for Historians: Thomas Abbt on Biblical and Conjectural Accounts of Human Nature", *History of European Ideas* 41, no. 5 (2015): 605–618.
20. Dohm, *Bürgerliche Verbesserung*, 25.
21. See J. Karp, *The Politics of Jewish Commerce: Economic Thought and Emancipation in Europe, 1638–1848* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 97–106.
22. Dohm, *Bürgerliche Verbesserung*, 18–19.
23. Ibid., 20. (My translation; original emphasis)
24. This specific aspect of the treatise has been used by its most recent editor, Wolf Christoph Seifert, to counter previous claims concerning Dohm's supposedly proto-anti-Semitic tendencies: See his comprehensive Kommentar in Vol. 2 of Dohm, *Bürgerliche Verbesserung*, 29. For more on the debate following Dohm's proposals, see (among other items) H. Möller, "Aufklärung, Judentum und Staat: Ursprung und Wirkung von Dohms Schrift über die bürgerliche Verbesserung der Juden", in *Deutsche Aufklärung*, ed. W. Grab (Tel Aviv: Tel Aviv University, 1980), 119–149; R. Liberles, "Dohm's Treatise on the Jews: A Defense of the Enlightenment", *Leo Baeck Institute Yearbook* 33 (1988): 29–42; H.E. Bödeker, "'Aber ich strebe nach einer weiteren Sphäre als bloß litterarischer Thätigkeit': Intentionen, Haltungen und Wirkungsfelder Christian Wilhelm von Dohms", *Zeitschrift für Religions- und Geistesgeschichte* 54, no. 4 (2002): 305–325; G. Heinrich, "'... man sollte itzt beständig das Publikum über diese Materie en haleine halten': Die Debatte um 'bürgerliche Verbesserung' der Juden 1781–1786", in *Appell an das Publikum: Die öffentliche Debatte in der deutschen Aufklärung 1687–1796*, ed. U. Goldenbaum (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 2004), 2:813–986. More generally, see I. Freund, *Die Emanzipation der Juden in Preussen unter besonderer Berücksichtigung des Gesetzes von 11. März 1812: Ein Beitrag zur Rechtsgeschichte der Juden in Preussen*, 2 vols. (Berlin: M. Poppelauer, 1912).
25. M. Mendelssohn, "Manasseh Ben Israel Rettung der Juden aus dem Englischen übersetzt nebst einer Vorrede von Moses Mendelssohn", in *Gesammelte Schriften-Jubiläumsausgabe*, ed. F. Bamberger, et al. (Berlin; Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt: Rosenbaum & Hart, 1929), 8:3–25. It is noteworthy that Mendelssohn eschewed Dohm's vocabulary and instead of *improvement* he wrote of *acceptance* or *inclusion* (*Aufnahme*) of the Jews by the state. The title of the French translation of Dohm's treatise, supervised by the author, was C.W.

- Dohm, *De la réforme politique des Juifs*, trans. J. Bernoulli (Dessau: Librairie des auteurs et des artistes, 1782).
26. On the Jewish controversies surrounding the writing of *Jerusalem*, see S. Feiner, *The Jewish Enlightenment*, trans. C. Naor (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003), 87–177. For different contemporary Jewish views of Moses and his revelation, see C. Schulte, *Die jüdische Aufklärung: Philosophie, Religion, Geschichte* (Munich: Beck, 2002), 56–80.
  27. M. Mendelssohn, “Das Forschen nach Licht und Recht in einem Schreiben an Herrn Moses Mendelssohn auf Veranlassung seiner merkwürdigen Vorrede zu Manasseh Ben Israel”, in *Gesammelte Schriften – Jubiläumsausgabe*, ed. F. Bamberger, et al. (Berlin; Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt: Rosenbaum & Hart, 1929), 8:75–92.
  28. This distinction had already appeared in a shorter essay of 1781, M. Mendelssohn, “Von vollkommenen und unvollkommenen Rechten und Pflichten”, in *Gesammelte Schriften – Jubiläumsausgabe*, ed. F. Bamberger, et al. (Berlin; Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt, 1929), 3.1:280–282. Mendelssohn’s most immediate source was probably a translation of Adam Ferguson’s *Institutes of Moral Philosophy* (1769) by Christian Garve (1772); see the footnote in Mendelssohn, *Gesammelte Schriften*, 8:123–124; and A. Altmann, *Die trostvolle Aufklärung: Studien zur Metaphysik und politischen Theorie Moses Mendelssohns* (Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt: Frommann-Holzboog, 1982), 180.
  29. Mendelssohn, *Gesammelte Schriften*, 8:126–128. Cf. A. Lifschitz, “Language as a Means and an Obstacle to Freedom: The Case of Moses Mendelssohn”, in *Freedom and the Construction of Europe*, ed. Q. Skinner and M. van Gelderen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 2:84–102.
  30. Mendelssohn, *Gesammelte Schriften*, 8:156–160.
  31. Ibid., 193–196.
  32. W. von Humboldt, *The Limits of State Action*, ed. J.W. Burrow (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969), 70; W. von Humboldt, “Ideen zu einem Versuch, die Grenzen der Wirksamkeit des Staates zu bestimmen”, in *Wilhelm von Humboldts Werke*, ed. A. Leitzmann (Berlin: B. Behr, 1903), 1:164.
  33. F. Schleiermacher, “Schriften aus der Berliner Zeit 1796–1799”, in *Kritische Gesamtausgabe*, ed. G. Meckenstock (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2011), 2:348.
  34. D. Friedländer, F. Schleiermacher, and W.A. Teller, *A Debate on Jewish Emancipation and Christian Theology in Old Berlin*, ed. R. Crouter and J. Klassen (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett, 2004), 34; F. Schleiermacher, *Schriften aus der Berliner Zeit*, 2:375.
  35. On Friedländer, see recently U. Lohmann, *David Friedländer: Reformpolitik im Zeichen von Aufklärung und Emancipation* (Hanover: Wehrhahn, 2013); and “‘auf daß getrennte Zonen geistige und körperliche Schätze umtauschen und gemeinsam genießen’: David Friedländers soziale Interaktion mit Berliner Gelehrten, Künstlern und Staatsmännern”, in *Jüdische und christliche Intellektuelle in Berlin 1800: Freundschaften, Partnerschaften, Feindschaften*, ed. C. Wiedemann and A. Lifschitz (forthcoming).
  36. W.A. Teller, *Beantwortung des Sendschreibens einiger Hausväter jüdischer Religion an mich, den Probst Teller* (Berlin: Mylius, 1799).
  37. Friedländer, et al., *A Debate*, 98; Schleiermacher, *Schriften aus der Berliner Zeit*, 2:347.
  38. Friedländer, et al., *A Debate*, 101–102; Schleiermacher, *Schriften aus der Berliner Zeit*, 2:351.
  39. Friedländer, et al., *A Debate*, 97; Schleiermacher, *Schriften aus der Berliner Zeit*, 2:345–347.

40. Cf. P. Bernardini and D. Lucci, *The Jews, Instructions for Use: Four Eighteenth-Century Projects for the Emancipation of European Jews* (Brighton, MA: Academic Studies Press, 2012), 27–30.
41. See, for example, the virulently anti-Jewish treatises by C.W.F. Grattenauer, *Ueber die physische und moralische Verfasung der heutigen Juden: Stimme eines Kosmopoliten* (1791); and *Wider die Juden: Ein Wort der Warnung an alle unsere christliche Mitbürger* (1803).

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## Section IV

# Adaption and Translation of Reform Languages



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# 14 The Difficult Reform of Military Discipline in the Latter Half of Eighteenth-Century France<sup>1</sup>

*Isabelle Deflers*

## Introduction

In the second half of the eighteenth century, France was dominated by the express determination to reform those areas of government underpinning the monarchy, including that of finance, justice, and the army. In the military, the debate was provoked by the disorders caused by the War of the Austrian Succession as well as the setbacks suffered by the French troops during the Seven Years' War.<sup>2</sup> It was so passionate that it reached beyond the military itself into the public sphere. Public attention was then focused on the new military power of the Kingdom of Prussia and its famous *Solomon of the North*, who was a friend of Voltaire's, as well as on d'Alembert and other enlightened philosophers.<sup>3</sup>

Although the idea of reform was ubiquitous in that age, the term itself was a generic one used in the analyses carried out after the event. Thus, the word *reform* would be sought for in vain in contemporary sources. Indeed, in the original texts the authors speak of *change* or *restoration* of the officers' desire to "perfect their profession".<sup>4</sup> Moreover, there was talk of *renewing*,<sup>5</sup> *mending*, *rectifying*, *correcting*, *adjusting*, or even of *perfecting*, for example, *by simplifying*.<sup>6</sup> All of these terms suggest changes, transformations, adaptations, and improvements, both in the tactical system and in the organisation of the French army, and are widely interspersed throughout the military memoranda drafted at that time. The vocabulary used was not chosen at random, for it concerned proposals for improvements within the French army while respecting its underlying traditional structures. Instead, it would be more accurate to speak of *correction* rather than of *change*, which could frighten the most conservative among the decision makers of the War Department as well as among military experts who read these kinds of memoranda. The terms chosen were certainly meant to evoke a sort of renewal – but one that was supposed to take place within a traditional framework that was not to be disturbed.

It is within this context of reformist hopes that the question concerning military discipline poses the most problems. In the archives of the

Ministry of Defence the term *discipline* occupies a special place. Through their editing of technical memoranda preserved at the *Service Historique de la Défense*, Hervé Dréville and Arnaud Guinier have just shown how sensitive this question actually was.<sup>7</sup> As a result of the Enlightenment, it was no longer a mere question of subjecting the soldier to a degrading treatment in order to instil absolute obedience but to appeal to his honour, to *persuade* or *convince* him, for “it is by reasoning . . . that one will be able to take maximum advantage by acquiring his confidence, getting him excited to the extent of fanaticism for his party, for his cause, for his leader”.<sup>8</sup> From then on it was necessary for a commander to merit the confidence of his men, “to stir up within them honour, sentiments, principles, self-esteem, and interest, concealed engines which will carry them with gayety and exactitude to the execution of all that their duty prescribes them, of all that can be asked of men”.<sup>9</sup> Discipline was, then, enlightened. It became a favourite subject of discussion, because it no longer involved mere corporal discipline but was henceforth seen as a means to enoble the soldier in the moral sense. Discipline thus guaranteed the needed order for the development of troops and consequently constituted a fundamental basis of modern tactics. At the same time, it framed the so-called French value of bravery and warlike impetus. The good soldier, then, was not a hero who thought solely of his own glory but a disciplined soldier ready to sacrifice himself for his country, whose actions, by definition beneficial to his commander and regiment, contributed to victory. This new conception of discipline became part of a new movement for the democratisation and nationalisation of honour, highlighted by Arnaud Guinier in his work on the French military in the eighteenth century.<sup>10</sup> Hence, honour came to be the surest guarantor of discipline. In order to do this, however, the very idea of reform as involving transformations, innovations, changes, and consequently upheavals had to be accepted in the first place. It was precisely this point that gave rise to major difficulties.

The following dilemma accurately outlines the problem confronting the French army at this time: On the one hand, all the military experts and *généralités* agreed that a thorough overhaul of the military had become an absolute necessity. On the other hand, the implementation of *novelties*<sup>11</sup> and its probable effect on the essence of the military system, the very spirit of the inherited ancestral construction, was feared. Indeed, this would be nothing less than a veritable *revolution*.<sup>12</sup> In this context, the unrest arising from the reform of French military discipline offers us a perfect example of the ostensible threat caused by such a renewal in the eyes of many high-ranking officers jealous of retaining the privileges they enjoyed in this last bastion reserved only to the *noblesse d'épée* at the end of the Ancien Régime.

In order to fully understand the stakes involved in the implementation of such reforms, it should be understood that the very fact of requiring

reform in the sense of improvement suggested both acknowledging deficiencies and accepting the fact that standards other than one's own could be considered as models. It is, however, not to be taken for granted that inspiration could be drawn from an external model and its imitation respectively. While references to ancient authors seems to have been unproblematic because of their recognised and accepted authority,<sup>13</sup> it became more complicated when dealing with contemporary powers as models.<sup>14</sup> The terms *imitation*, *imitate*, and *imitator* turned into veritable spectres. They, in turn, aroused repulsion and fuelled a *national* discourse, whose rhetoric served to cast opprobrium on reforms which were supposedly contrary to the "national spirit" of the French soldiers.<sup>15</sup> This rhetorical tactic, moreover, apparently worked well and even caused the Comte de Saint-Germain, then Secretary of State for War, to fall into disgrace.<sup>16</sup>

At this point, it is important to remember that the interest aroused by the debates on the renewal of the army was not confined to military professionals.<sup>17</sup> Indeed, public opinion as a whole was interested in questions of tactics and even more so with questions relating to military discipline<sup>18</sup> as well as to penalties and punishments in general, evidenced by the enthusiasm in France for Cesare Beccaria's *Dei delitti e delle pene*, published in 1764 and translated into French by Abbé Morellet in 1766. It was also this enthusiasm that explains the success enjoyed by the work of Arnaud Guibert, *Les Lumières de la guerre*, which was immediately prohibited upon its publication in 1772. Yet the censorship did not in any way hinder the dissemination of the book, nor, for that matter, of the encyclopaedists' works, or even those written by Voltaire, Baron d'Holbach, Julien Offray de la Mettrie, and many other enlightened authors of the eighteenth century. In the second half of the eighteenth century, public opinion asserted itself as an authority competing with that of the state and judging by the growing opposition to the decisions taken by the Ministry of War, this tendency can be increasingly verified in the years preceding the Revolution. Those officers who were authors of memoranda that had hitherto been ignored by the members of the Military Committee took their revenge by having their works published, thus taking the *court of public opinion* to task.<sup>19</sup> This strategy illustrates the willingness of these officer writers to challenge the right of the War Department to decide exclusively on reforms to be implemented in the army. These authors thus founded their legitimacy based on a public opinion that was both military and enlightened.<sup>20</sup>

## Painful Reforms

Nonetheless, this willingness to make shortcomings relating to the safety of the monarchy public did not occur without resistance. Among the heirs of the lost grandeur of the old army of Louis XIV, many indeed

were reluctant to accept the loss of France's place in the front rank of European military powers. Any reference to Prussia, in particular, seems to have been the object of considerable scepticism in spite of the fact that the Prussian army had begun to assert itself ever since the beginning of the War of the Austrian Succession at the Battle of Mollwitz in 1741 against the Austrian army – a formidable opponent with a long military experience against the Ottoman troops among others – and had become an established military power by 1763. The French were indeed humiliated after a succession of defeats had been inflicted upon them by an upstart nation, whose title of nobility was not even a century old.<sup>21</sup> Thus, the experts and French military officers were forced to acknowledge errors committed during the latest campaigns and, as a result, to witness their own army's loss of status as a model, becoming in turn a mere imitation. The dishonour associated with such degradation explains the occasional pathetic tone of some military writings, including one by a man named Charleval in his *Mémoire sur l'éducation et la discipline militaire* from 1785. He considered the introduction of foreign norms and measures into a nation with a well-established reputation to be extremely dangerous, especially if the reform programme was "too contrary to its spirit".<sup>22</sup> It would serve for the dissolution (according to the meaning of the term *se résoudre* in old French) of this same nation and – here in particular the French nation – would "then [trans]form [her] into a new model".<sup>23</sup> The reform of discipline was symptomatic of this incompatibility between imported foreign rules and *the spirit of the nation*, since it was in perfect "contradiction . . . with national customs".<sup>24</sup>

The tactician François-Philippe Loubat, Baron de Bohan (1751–1804), who led a company of dragoons when he was 30, became colonel of the Lorraine dragoons in 1784 and finally *aide-major général* of the gendarmerie, argued in a similar fashion. A native of Bourg-en-Bresse, he owned a library of selected works, a study room of natural history, and kept a special garden with many successfully acclimated exotic plants. In 1783 he became a member of the literary society of his city, of which he was appointed president several times. Keenly interested in horseback riding, he wrote several memoranda on war-horse dressage<sup>25</sup> and on studs.<sup>26</sup> His five-volume work entitled *Examen critique du militaire françois* is followed by an additional treatise that dealt with "principles governing [the French military's] constitution, discipline, and education".<sup>27</sup> Additionally, he spoke out against the reduction of France to the imitation of others, which in his eyes was tantamount to admitting defeat.<sup>28</sup>

The criticism found in the introduction to this young noble scholar's work perfectly illustrates the dilemma mentioned previously. The author complained about the chaos created by the multitude of writings on the military and the inextricable mass of ordinances. Similarly, he criticised the growing practice of granting an overly dominant role to subordination and discipline, which, as he saw it, would attempt to turn soldiers

into mere automatons. The very fact of having allowed both a debate on the soundness of a fundamental reform of the French army and the excitement about the implementation of possible programmes risked opening a Pandora's box, he worried. The disparity of opinion between officers of each regiment regarding the organisation of the French army would, in fact, create chaos, which would be harmful to the stability of the constitution of the military. The term *reforms* thus replaced *revolutions*, which, according to Bohan, had been underway in the military for 12 years, that is to say since the end of the ministry of Choiseul in 1770 and the beginning of that of Abbé Terray and Maupeou between 1771 and 1774.

## How to Counteract Indiscipline?

The debate goes back, in fact, to the aftermath of the War of the Austrian Succession (1740–1748), when deficits in troop exercise and movements became blatant. This was particularly the case following the ill-fated intervention in Bohemia and the defeat at Dettingen in 1743, the main cause of which was imputed to the French troops' lack of discipline. This explains why as early as the Treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle the Comte d'Argenson, Minister and Secretary of State for War from 1743 to 1757, initiated a series of reforms concerning tactics and the training of troops.<sup>29</sup> Their peacetime training was to guarantee the army's effectiveness in times of war, when it had to react in the heat and turbulence of battle. In order for it to react predictably and, thus, decisively for the outcome of the fight, it was necessary that drilling become systematic and troop movements carried out in tight formation. Military step and training for the more effective handling of weapons was then introduced. Sway over the soldier's body was accentuated, which seemed to turn him into an automaton whose position and movements were regulated with unprecedented mathematical precision.

## Imitating the Prussians?

Particularly because of the *trauma* of the defeat of the French troops at Rossbach in 1757, the campaign for the remodelling of the French army was further intensified from 1763 onwards.<sup>30</sup> Not only had the Prussian army of Frederick II – which had been accepted as a model for about a decade – tactically crushed the French, but also the shame caused by the indiscipline of the French was reflected on all their officers and generals. In the search for a scapegoat for this debacle a restructuring of the military hierarchy, i.e. a transformation of the constitution of the military, was begun. Its main goal was to provide better supervision of the soldiers in order to avoid any similar disorders in the future. A transformation of the system of recruiting soldiers was undertaken first. Up until

that point officers recruited their own men. A captain, like a contractor investing in his staff, recruited his company by means of his own funds, which induced him to limit *losses*, given that each soldier who deserted or was executed had to be replaced by another soldier. This cost the captain money. The Comte de Choiseul (1719–1785), then Secretary of State for War (1761–1770), decided to put an end to this system. As early as 5 November 1758, the companies of the royal corps of artillery were directly recruited in the name of the king. What had been possible for a corps of 4,000 men should also be possible for the other regiments. Just as the king had been supplying armaments since 1690, clothing since 1753, the troops' horses since 1743, he would henceforth undertake to supply the infantry with men. The ordinance of 27 December 1760 was, therefore, the consequence of these views and dealt a heavy blow to the organisation of the old army. Choiseul also created military schools and organised artillery and engineers in such a way as to give these special corps superiority over other weapons. It was said that he imitated the King of Prussia, whose *revolution* in tactics had impressed him very much, and that his ordinances of 10 and 21 December 1762 organised the French army according to the system that had assured Frederick II his victories.<sup>31</sup>

To use the words of Bohan, these *revolutions* would be the source of the greatest evils of the French army in his day. The expressions he used to plead his cause are very expressive: He spoke of *the passion for copying our neighbours* and of *childish imitations*<sup>32</sup> as well as of the *servile appetite for imitation*.<sup>33</sup> The greatest danger was that of wanting to imitate a model whose spirit did not in any way correspond to that of the French at all costs. It was at this point that Bohan attacked the so-called *Prussian makers* who, in the eyes of the class of tacticians for whom he was speaking, were the cause of all these disturbing reforms. These *French Prussians* who complained that their troops were not sufficiently disciplined would be more successful at making their soldiers more obedient if they learned to command them before criticising them. It was the art of leadership without the stifling force of oppressive discipline that allowed for complete control, even when dealing with the warlike zeal of impetuous troops. The latter, indeed, would be a harmful discipline, “for it irritated the soul, stifled genius, and degraded man”.<sup>34</sup>

## The Time of the Reformation

In his *Dictionnaire synonymique de la langue française*, the French grammarian and lexicographer Jean-Charles [Thibault de] Laveaux (1749–1827) distinguished between *reformation* as *the act of reforming* and *reform* as being *its effect*: “In times of reformation, things are put in order and the means for remedying abuses are sought after.”<sup>35</sup> According

to this definition, Bohan and his contemporaries, along with their works, are situated in this so-called *reformation* period, since for them it was a question of reflecting on the drawbacks of existing practices and proposing appropriate solutions to be implemented. Their approach was marked by a very strong aversion to any profound change. Indeed, in their eyes all kinds of divisions had been engendered by the innovations that had been carried out since the Treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle of 1748, which marked the end of the War of the Austrian Succession, and especially since that of Paris in 1763, marking the end of the Seven Years' War.<sup>36</sup> These dissensions had both harmed an incontestable and undisputed authority, the very principle on which military hierarchy and its corollary, discipline, were supposed to rest. According to Bohan, even if the goal – the strict observance of the laws – were the same, rewards and punishments would have to be defined according to the spirit of each individual nation. Without a certain amount of discipline, an army would hardly be more than a simple gang of bandits made all the more dangerous inasmuch as they were armed and trained in the use of arms: "To grant despotism and justice is therefore the goal, and would be the masterpiece of military discipline."<sup>37</sup>

Here the term "despotism" is not synonymous with a political system, i.e. it neither refers to Montesquieu nor to the Chevalier de Jaucourt's article, "Despotism," in the *Encyclopaedia*. Instead it alludes to the will of a single individual in the military, in this instance to the officer who at that time held sway as a single master, i.e. as a *despot* over the soldiers of his regiment when it came to punishing or even physically chastising them. Justice and the resulting discipline would thus be the necessary corrective measures to this all-powerful, arbitrary power and was therefore, according to Bohan, who wrote in the same spirit as the famous Milanese lawyer Cesare Beccaria or the unfortunate minister and Secretary of State for War, the Comte de Saint-Germain, the goal to be reached.

The debate concerning military discipline flared up in this *reforming* context. The term *discipline* will therefore be examined as it was used in the military and the public sphere by studying the social and political issues involved in this question, not only particularly in the military but also more generally in the society of the Ancien Régime. Following the numerous and far too radical and rapid reforms of the Comte de Saint-Germain, the extent to which this debate on the reform of discipline became symptomatic of the impossibility for the monarchy to regenerate itself shall be examined (I). The question will then be whether this disciplinary issue became taboo on account of its association with the previously mentioned risks of imitation, or if, on the contrary, the need for professionalisation had finally silenced the susceptibilities of a particular segment of the *noblesse d'épée* (II). In conclusion, an attempt will be made at evaluating the connotations given to the term *reform* in the French discourse on discipline during the Ancien Régime.

## I. The Challenges of Reforming Military Discipline

The presence of the spirit of the Enlightenment in the debates carried out within the military, which is largely still ignored and underestimated in historiography, is the first striking peculiarity when one looks at this period of the Ancien Régime's military history. Interest in military matters is illustrated not only by the mass of documents drafted by experts and officers in charge but also unexpectedly by the equally large number of documents drafted by “opinion givers” who had no other qualification than feeling entitled to do so. A multitude of writings were addressed at that time to the Ministry of War by subjects who were apparently merely desirous of contributing to the improvement of areas in the monarchy that in their eyes were deficient, such as finance, administration, the political situation, and the military establishment.<sup>38</sup> This practice seems to have been entirely accepted and even encouraged during the reign of Louis XV. The monarchy seems to have been increasingly aware of the importance of “knowing in order to act, knowing in order to modernise”.<sup>39</sup> Thus, the eighteenth century witnessed governments' accumulation of intelligence regarding their territories and subjects by means of forms, statistics, surveys, and memoranda of all kinds, which became essential and daily instruments of the administration's knowledge and actions.<sup>40</sup>

The great amount of military memoranda written in the eighteenth century also illustrates the intellectual emulation and the awareness of the participatory critical faculties of public opinion described by Kant at the end of the century of the Enlightenment.<sup>41</sup> According to the well-known definition of the German philosopher in his programmatic text, “An Answer to the Question: What Is Enlightenment?” published in 1784, the critical spirit, born of the individual's emancipation, should be practiced in society and for the common good. The spread of the Enlightenment would thus be conditioned by the freedom to “make public use of one's reason in every matter”, and, therefore, in the military too. The diversity of positions on discipline particularly reveals the controversies raised by the innovations and reform programmes envisaged to improve their effectiveness. However, they also illustrate the spread of Enlightenment ideas in the military. The French specialist of modern military history Hervé Dréville says that if one accepts the notion of a sixteenth-century military humanism, it must be admitted that there was also an *Enlightenment of war*.<sup>42</sup>

However, what was meant by the term *military discipline* at that time? The new warfare techniques then implemented owed their effectiveness to the disciplinary practices underlying the new tactics. At the end of the Ancien Régime, combat on the battlefield was based on a well-defined distribution of combatants and on a series of movements that they were required to perform in a given time. In a word, like a well-oiled machine,

everything depended on the speed, precision, and coordination of the soldiers' movements in relation to each other. Clever collective manoeuvres which allowed several columns of soldiers to march in an oblique order to the right or the left, combining thereby the strength of the infantry with the speed of the cavalry, could only be realised with soldiers who were submissive and had been well-trained prior to executing such formations. The effectiveness of this so-called modern tactic, of which Frederick II was considered the illustrious founder,<sup>43</sup> was based on the soldiers' submissiveness, i.e. on bodily training, conceptualised by Michel Foucault as a *microphysics of power*. Every movement was to be standardised, assimilated, and incorporated to the point of reducing soldiers to veritable machines, which the army of Frederick the Great is continually accused of having done.<sup>44</sup>

Michel Foucault's analysis seems to be confirmed by the Comte de Guibert's definition of discipline as the willingness of bodies and minds to practice a certain self-censorship in order to meet the standards and hence to obey political orders. Indeed, in 1779 Guibert wrote that he understood *true discipline* to be that which *toughened the body*, which made the military hierarchy respected, made order reign, and brought such a degree of satisfaction to all of its members that there was no more need of barracks or ramparts to retain them.<sup>45</sup> The latest research on military discipline has shown that the challenge of the military establishment at the end of the Ancien Régime was precisely to forge the principle of an inner discipline in order to generate voluntary adherence from the soldier. The latter was no longer considered a mere automaton or donkey but on the contrary as an individual that was, to be sure, subjected to rules but was nonetheless considered autonomous. There seems to have been a gradual formation of a new relationship between the soldier and the military establishment based on the principle of its members' moral adherence to the disciplinary requirements of this great machinery.<sup>46</sup>

This is exactly what Guibert's definition illustrates. For him, *social* or civil discipline was a part of the military discourse and thus became a political tool for disciplining.<sup>47</sup> Taking into account the soldier's notion of loyalty, one of the aims of this new form of disciplinary power was to effectively combat desertion, which was still a very destructive force within the armies of the Ancien Régime.

For the *philosopher soldier*, however, it was primarily a matter of demonising the image of discipline as being the institution of Prussian-style corporal punishments.<sup>48</sup> Moreover, the brutality of these penalties was epitomised in the public by the blows dealt on the backs of soldiers with the flat side of a sabre, the notorious *Fuchteln*, which was hated not only in enlightened circles but also by the nobility. The latter, in fact, were outraged to see this type of punishment applied to all military personnel irrespective of their rank (and thus their social status) and apparently

substituted it with prison sentences for lesser offences, something that has remained in effect to the present day.

By introducing the *Fuchteln*, the Comte de Saint-Germain, who was then Secretary of State for War, wished to replace dishonourable punishments involving a stick with a nobler instrument such as the sabre or sword. Saint-Germain's objective, however, was above all to regulate the conditions of penal enforcement in order to combat the abuse of corporal punishments that were arbitrarily determined and assigned by officers within their own regiment – of which they were owners in some way. All this was, therefore, meant to contribute to the uniformity of the forms of punishment and to regulate the authority of the officers and thus – in the longer term – to professionalise the army. However, he made many enemies with his censure of the sale of offices and with the new form of discipline that he required of officers, regardless of their noble status, in order to make models of rigour and effective instruction.

Finally, from October 1775 to September 1777, within just two years of his ministry, Saint-Germain succeeded in implementing some 98 ordinances, regulations, declarations, and verdicts. This exorbitant figure testifies to the radicalism of his desire to carry out a profound reform of the French army. It was precisely this desire to completely restructure the French military, together with his lack of tact and sensitivity to the susceptibilities of the *noblesse d'épée*, that caused his rapid fall from grace.<sup>49</sup> Saint-Germain had, in fact, initiated a policy that called for recognition of the educated provincial nobility's merits. Despite his failure in 1777 Louis XVI's other ministers continued his policy by recruiting advisors and army officers from the provincial nobility faithful to the crown. In spite of the failure of this great (in a sense) social reform of the French army, this attempt explains the violent rejection of any new reform project found in the works of military experts such as Charleval, Bohan, Mesnil-Durand, among others, as will be seen later.

Before his fall, however, one of Saint-Germain's major decisions was to draw up a code consolidating all military orders in 1776. Desiring to contribute to this immense task, Baron de Maltzan dispatched a memorandum dated 5 June 1776, which he had written on the question of discipline some years previously.<sup>50</sup> This career soldier, who had begun serving at the age of 16 as second lieutenant in the *régiment d'Alsace*, rose to the rank of *colonel en second* of the *régiment de Bourgogne* on 18 April 1776. It is interesting to note that his 30-year career had enabled him to rise to a rank that was quite extraordinary for a member of the minor provincial nobility without connections in high society, although it is true that his career was still slower and less brilliant than that of members of the court nobility. As we have seen time and again, it was precisely these differences within the nobility that explain the resistance to countless abortive reform projects over the final decades of the Ancien Régime.

In the meantime, it was these years of service that allowed Maltzan to justify his unsolicited spontaneous contribution to the codification of military orders. If he considered himself legitimately qualified to give advice on matters of discipline, it was because he himself led a vast array of soldiers and officers. His expertise was therefore based above all on his experience but also on a profound theoretical knowledge.<sup>51</sup>

By the time he wrote his memorandum, military discipline had already undergone major transformations and had become a favourite subject of many memoranda. The text by Maltzan is an important testimony to the debate on this topic in that it summarises the main themes: First, it defines discipline and demonstrates its advantages, then it explains how it should be introduced into the army, and it finishes by analysing its role in the improvement of tactics. Contrary to passions, which in his eyes only caused disorder, Maltzan understood discipline to be the guarantor of the order requisite for troop movements.<sup>52</sup> For this author, then, there was no question of “opposing the introduction of discipline in the name of a French value of bravery and warlike impetus”,<sup>53</sup> the renowned *national spirit of France*,<sup>54</sup> which preferred the sword to the firearm. According to him, glory could solely rest on the culture of discipline and endurance.<sup>55</sup> Thus, the true soldier had to be a disciplined actor serving the fatherland and not a hero guided only by his instincts and personal interests, whose deeds were more harmful than useful.

The difficulty for this exponent of military enlightenment, however, was to reconcile the demand for discipline without reducing the soldiers to mere automatons and in particular to instil the sense of duty in them. Discipline was, therefore, not supposed to be reduced to a mere automation of the body but constitute a true education, whose aim was the greater good of one’s country.<sup>56</sup> The emphasis placed on patriotism was explained by the fact that love for their country led men to sacrifice their personal interests in favour of the collective good and it engendered virtue, the supreme quality of republics. Now, Maltzan was well aware of the limitations placed upon this patriotic ideal within the framework of a monarchical society. Hence, he turned to another principle, that of honour. This would indeed be an eminent quality of the *French nation*. It should, however, be subordinated to discipline and placed at the service of the military establishment, which seems to contradict the idea of an intrinsic quality, innate, in a way, to the nation. Patriotism forged the minds, stirring up the soldier’s sense of honour, forming him so that he only served the esprit de corps.<sup>57</sup> In order for this to be done, punishing by blows or bullying was futile. Instead, education was necessary for developing an esprit de corps. This quite optimistic notion of pedagogy was one of the leitmotivs of the Enlightenment.<sup>58</sup> Though they were not to be entirely extinguished, punishments became less arbitrary and more just. Moreover, rewards were to lead the soldier towards the desired goal. Consequently, this enhancement of self-esteem would allow the soldier to

acquire honour, which would then be the safest means of ensuring discipline within the army. Ultimately, bodily training combined with that of the mind would result in the merging of honour and discipline into one.<sup>59</sup>

However, Maltzan's beautiful project met with resistance. He was very conscious of this and consequently referred in his memorandum to "the generals ... deaf to reason", who increasingly distanced themselves from the *principles of art* and even neglected *national advantages*.<sup>60</sup> In accordance with the detractors of any reform based on the Prussian model, it was precisely the disregard for the *national spirit* which was the major cause of all the evils of the French army, since the laws that govern it had been reduced to the mere imitation of those of their neighbours.

## II. The Essence of References to *the National Spirit of France*

Though its importance should not be over-interpreted, the issue of the reform of military discipline at the end of the Ancien Régime is particularly instructive. In many respects, it is indicative of the social, political, and intellectual climate that prevailed in France at that time. As we have just seen, it primarily implies that the relations between superiors and subordinates or between officers and soldiers were called into question. This, in turn, was brought about by the new Enlightenment desire to *ennoble* the common soldier by instilling within him a sense of honour, an esprit de corps, and willingness to sacrifice himself for his country. Furthermore, this challenge was compounded by the rise of a new generation of officers, who – because of their good training – tried to make themselves heard in debates about reforms of all kinds within the army. Thereby they challenged the hitherto untouchable – the monopoly of interpretation held by the *noblesse d'épée* at court and the senior ranks of the army. Many of these young officers had directly confronted Frederick II's troops during the wars of the second half of the eighteenth century or had been trained in the spirit of the modern tactic inspired by the manoeuvres of the King of Prussia. In both cases, even if some of them – like the Comte de Guibert in his famous *Essai général de tactique* (1772) – did not hesitate to formulate basic criticism, most of the representatives of this new generation viewed the organisation of the Prussian army as a benchmark to be emulated. This discussion on the manner in which a model should be imitated was part of a major debate carried out in a climate disrupted by the humiliating defeat of the French at Rossbach in 1757. In the years following the Treaty of Paris in 1763, reference to the *spirit of the French nation* was indeed increasingly invoked as a powerful argument against any form of importation and incorporation into the French army of foreign techniques and knowledge. However, beyond the difficulty of losing the first military rank on the European scene, the effectiveness of this *national* argument is essentially explained by political

factors peculiar to the French monarchy. The risk of being treated as *Prussian makers* seems to have been perceived as a serious threat to the reputation and authority of those who dared to express themselves in favour of a reform programme inspired by Frederick the Great's new army. In addressing the social and political issues that were played out in the sub-text in this debate on *imitation*, it becomes clear that this enquiry was not technical but goes back to the question of a particular generation of officers' monopoly of interpretation – a problem already mentioned previously. It thus undermined the foundations of the three-estate system in which the military constitution seemed to be increasingly distancing itself from the fundamental principles of the civil constitution.<sup>61</sup> Indeed, by becoming a more and more professional organisation with newly created military schools, the new requirements for exemplary behaviour demanded of officers, and the enhancement of the common soldier's condition by virtue of his training, the army gradually emancipated itself from the societal structure of the Ancien Régime and thus from the influence exerted by a segment of the *noblesse d'épée* holding the decision-making power within the War Department. The strong reaction against this development was demonstrated by the increasingly harsh censorship of these opinions which continued to express themselves more and more freely and publicly. This very censorship, as highlighted previously, also became a question of power with respect to the memoranda of officers or *common soldiers* sent as personal contributions to the War Department. In response to this growing demand to be heard, printing bans imposed by the War Department and bookshops became increasingly common at the end of the eighteenth century. An example of this was the ban on Guibert's *Essai général de tactique*, which was condemned for its scathing criticism of the French army and its overly explicit attacks on senior officers as well as for its excessive admiration for the Prussian army. In this context it is easy to understand why Guibert considered it necessary in his dedication to forestall dangerous attacks to his reputation, calumniated by his detractors as an *anti-patriot*. Indeed, the title of the dedication is "To my country". He justified his criticisms through his search for truth,<sup>62</sup> affirming his patriotism by his sole desire to contribute to the prosperity of his country. He hoped it would be useful to its citizens and to not displease foreigners. As he declared, it was his sole intention to write for France and to be read by the rest of Europe. However, this search for truth necessarily involved the denunciation of abuses and the proposal of remedies to improve the situation of his country's military. His ambition was to raise a "political and military constitution; . . . a national discipline; . . . a comprehensive tactic; making use of all existing materials for this purpose; sifting through the debris of ages and the current knowledge of all nations".<sup>63</sup>

In this dedication, Guibert avoided using the terms *reform* or *change*, which could cause him trouble. Instead he preferred to use the more

innocuous term *remedies*,<sup>64</sup> thus enabling him to emphasise his sole desire to devote himself through this endeavour entirely to his country. Despite this language strategy, Guibert could not avoid being criticised. The specialist of ancient military science Paul-Gédéon Joly de Maizeroy (1719–1780) accused him, for example, of developing a modern tactic that would not take into account the specific traits of the French nation and would ignore the role of the historical legacy of a nation's military constitution. He especially condemned Guibert for his *mania for imitating* the Prussian model which, in his opinion, would be fatal to the French nation inasmuch as it would run counter to the capabilities and talents of French soldiers.<sup>65</sup> In the end, however, beyond the technical discussion over line and column formations (*ordre mince* and *ordre profond*) this was really a “quarrel of the Ancients and the Moderns” pitting a “young soldier, of many talents” (Guibert) and a specialist of ancient tactics 24 years his senior (Maizeroy), whose real issue was the recognition of authority and the monopoly of interpretation between the traditionalist military experts and the reformers, many of whom, like Guibert, were proponents of the Enlightenment.<sup>66</sup>

## Conclusion

In his analysis of military memoranda as both a new instrument of administration and a new career strategy, Arnaud Guinier points out that it was necessary for the generation of new ideas, and hence reform programmes, to come with certain rewards attached. The desire to contribute to the public good had to be linked to the promotion of the contributing military personnel's private ambitions. In a way, this concept was echoed by the idea of creating a military academy, which began to circulate from 1752 onwards. The aim of the academy was to reinforce the esprit de corps of soldiers, who considered themselves the only ones competent enough to answer questions relating to the organisation and constitution of the army.<sup>67</sup> Public opinion, however, could no longer be tamed in this fashion. Military works, like all other types of publications, had to face the critical spirit of the enlightened men of their time. Nevertheless, the idea of a military monopoly was in fact challenged less than the War Department's exclusive entitlement to decide on reforms of the army. Since they were published, military writings and the reformist ideas contained therein were no longer only subject to the judgment of the military expert to whom they were addressed but to that of public opinion in the military as a whole.<sup>68</sup> Taking Kant's definition cited above, this phenomenon could even be extended to civil public opinion as a whole, since the “public use of one's reason [can and must be done] in every matter”. However, some matters seem to have been easier to criticise than others, and if one believes the countless texts written on this subject throughout the second half of the eighteenth century, this

was undoubtedly the case for military discipline. To some extent, then, there was a paradox between the willingness expressed by experts and public opinion to contribute to the reform in order to improve military discipline on the one hand and on the other hand the difficulty or even impossibility of effectively implementing a new form of discipline directly inspired by the spirit of the Enlightenment. This failure can only be explained because of social issues. Indeed, beyond the patriotic discourse that rejected any foreign – and in particular Prussian – model on the pretext that “imitation” could only lead to a system contrary to *the national spirit of France*, social issues also limited the degree to which soldiers of the Ancien Régime could be ennobled through *honour*. Having become indispensable by the end of the eighteenth century, references to the soldier’s *honour* and *ennoblement* (in the moral sense) appeared across Europe in the sources studied for the years 1760–1770.<sup>69</sup> Considering *honour* as a military quality and no longer as a social prerogative was difficult to accept for senior officers – constituting the same group of gentleman officers that increasingly aspired to participate in the decision-making of their *généralité* via writings of any kind. The reform of military discipline thus proved to be an issue of the social position of this group struggling for recognition on the part of its own superiors. In addition, it was a merciless battle for the guarantee of its monopoly of interpretation and knowledge of military matters. This struggle for social interests was finally settled in France by the abolition of privileges in August 1789 and by the advent of a completely new term illustrating the revolutionary spirit of the *soldier-citizen*.<sup>70</sup>

In conclusion, it can be said that the vocabulary used for the *regeneration* of the military contains terms referring to reformist ideas without contemporary usage of that term itself; on the contrary, there is a sophisticated balance between terms with a traditional connotation and those evoking renewal or changes. This was done in order to reassure a particular audience concerned about the destabilisation of the monarchical structures that underpinned the army and, as a result, the safety of the French monarchy. Moreover, the debates on military matters and hence the terms used within this context were new in that they emerged from the defeats (and the related shocks) suffered by French troops during the Seven Years’ War. The language of reform used in these texts perfectly reflects the dilemma of this era, characterised by both the need and the inability to meet the new demands of society, a society that was increasingly inspired by the spirit of the Enlightenment.

## Notes

1. I would like to thank my colleague Dr. Christopher Toenjes for his translation of my French article into English and the Wissenschaftliche Gesellschaft of the Albert-Ludwigs-Universität Freiburg as well as the German Historical Institute Paris for their financial support.

2. J. Chagniot, *Paris et l'armée au XVIIIe siècle: Étude sociale et politique* (Paris: Economica, 1985).
3. For more on this subject see I. Deflers, “Der reflektierte Staat: Preußen im Spiegel französischer Reformdiskurse (1763–1806)” (Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Universität Heidelberg, 2013).
4. F.T. baron de Maltzan, “Mémoire sur la Discipline militaire rédigé par le baron de Maltzan et envoyé au secrétaire d’État de la Guerre, le comte de Saint-Germain le 5 juin 1776”, in *Les Lumières de la guerre: Mémoires militaires du XVIIIe siècle conservés au service historique de la Défense*, ed. H. Dréville and A. Guinier (Paris: Publications de la Sorbonne, 2014), 1:192, 1:236–237. All translations of sources have been done by myself.
5. Maltzan, “Mémoire”, 195.
6. J.-A.-H. comte de Guibert, *Essai général de tactique, précédé d'un Discours sur l'état actuel de la politique et de la science militaire en Europe, avec le plan d'un ouvrage intitulé: La France politique et militaire* (London, 1772), 1: XCVIII.
7. H. Dréville and A. Guinier, eds., *Les Lumières de la guerre: Mémoires militaires du XVIIIe siècle conservés au service historique de la Défense*, 2 vols. (Paris: Publications de la Sorbonne, 2014).
8. Maltzan, “Mémoire”, 236–237.
9. Ibid., 238.
10. A. Guinier, *L'honneur du soldat: éthique martiale et discipline guerrière dans la France des Lumières* (Ceyzérieu: Champ Vallon, 2014); Dréville and Guinier, *Les Lumières de la guerre*.
11. The terms *novelties*, *restitution*, or *perfection* are used as synonyms for reforms, for example in Maltzan, “Mémoire”, 232, 248, 250.
12. F.L. de Bohan, *Examen critique du militaire françois, suivi Des principes qui doivent déterminer sa constitution, sa discipline et son instruction* (Geneva, 1781), 3: VIIJ.
13. The memorandum on military discipline written is packed with references to Greek and Roman military, designated by the term *ancient*, cf. inter alia: Ibid., 243–251.
14. “What is odd in the choice of an object to be placed alongside the glory and happiness of nations, [is that] it is not that the French, having imagined laws to be of such little consequence, I dare say ridiculous and unwise, in terms of their national spirit, but have blindly taken those of their neighbours, without examining the motives which led them to adapt them to their own, without reasoning in what ways they may be diametrically opposed to the direction and to what it ought constantly to serve as the basis and principle to guide the French nation in its actions.” Ibid., 244.
15. Maltzan, “Mémoire”, 195.
16. I. Deflers, “Vom Krieg lernen: Preußen als Modell im französischen Reformdiskurs nach 1763”, in *Krieg und Frieden im 18. Jahrhundert: Kulturge-schichtliche Studien*, ed. S. Stockhorst (Hannover: Wehrhahn, 2015), 621–637; I. Deflers, “Die Militärreformen des Comte von Saint-Germain, oder der Zankapfel zwischen ausländischen Vorbildern und nationalen Stereotypen”, *Zeitschrift für Historische Forschung* 42, no. 3 (2015): 411–432.
17. Dréville and Guinier, *Les Lumières de la guerre*, 1:102–112.
18. The interest of public opinion in this type of question is reflected in L.P. de Bachaumont, *Mémoires secrets pour servir à l'histoire de la République des lettres en France...* (London, 1783–1789), 12:123–124, 136–137.
19. Dréville and Guinier, *Les Lumières de la guerre*, 1:109.
20. Ibid., 111–112.

21. Prussia rose from being an electorate of the Holy Roman Empire to the rank of Kingdom of Prussia in 1701.
22. Charleval, *Mémoire sur l'éducation et la discipline militaire* (Villefranche, 1785), 1.
23. Ibid., 2.
24. Ibid., 4: “It can be seen that the weakness of our military constitution in France is due to two vices, which in turn are cause and effect: the want of education and instruction within the general class of officers, and the contradiction of discipline with national customs.”
25. F.L. de Bohan, *Examen critique du militaire françois, suivi Des principes qui doivent déterminer sa constitution, sa discipline et son instruction*, Vol. 3 (Geneva, 1781).
26. F.L. de Bohan, *Mémoire sur les haras, considérés comme une nouvelle richesse pour la France, et sur les moyens qui peuvent augmenter les avantages de la cavalerie française* (Paris, 1804).
27. Combined into three vols., cf. note nr. 25.
28. “Any people that becomes the disciple of another, whom it regards as its master in the art of fighting, is a people already defeated through the force of public opinion.” Bohan, *Examen*, 1: XVJ–XVIJ.
29. Y. Combeau, *Le Comte d'Argenson (1696–1764): ministre de Louis XV* (Paris: École nationale des chartes, 1999), 260–262, 273–305, 315–337.
30. B. Heuser, “Friedrich der Große und der Siebenjährige Krieg: Der ‘Mythos’ des großen Feldherrn in der Strategie-Literatur (18.–20. Jahrhundert)”, in *Der Siebenjährige Krieg (1756–1763): Ein europäischer Weltkrieg im Zeitalter der Aufklärung*, ed. S. Externbrink (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 2011), 181–195; T. Nicklas, “Die Schlacht von Rossbach (1757) zwischen Wahrnehmung und Deutung”, *Forschungen zur brandenburgischen und preußischen Geschichte* N.F. 12 (2002): 35–51; T. Nicklas, “Rossbach: du lieu de la violence au lieu de l'imagination”, in *Les voyageurs européens sur les chemins de la guerre et la paix du temps des Lumières au début du XIXe siècle*, ed. F. Knopper and A. Ruiz (Bordeaux: Presses Universitaires, 2006), 97–203.
31. “Choiseul (maison de), Etienne Joseph, duc de Choiseul-Stainville”, in *France: Dictionnaire encyclopédique*, ed. P. Le Bas (Paris, 1841), 5:145; for the privilege of being an officer and the reforms envisaged along these lines, see J. Chagniot, *Guerre et société à l'époque moderne* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 2001), 214–221.
32. Bohan, *Examen*, 1:93.
33. Ibid., 204.
34. Ibid., XVIJ.
35. J. Laveaux, *Dictionnaire synonymique de la langue française* (Paris, 1826), 1:263.
36. P.G. Joly de Maizeroy, *Mémoire sur les opinions qui partagent les militaires, suivi du Traité des armes défensives, corrigé & augmenté par M. Joly de Maizeroy, Lieutenant-Colonel d'Infanterie* (Paris, 1773), 103.
37. Bohan, *Examen*, 1:176.
38. A. Guinier, “Le mémoire comme projet de réforme au siècle des Lumières”, in Dréville and Guinier, *Les lumières de la guerre*, 1:23.
39. D. Roche, *La France des Lumières* (Paris: Fayard, 1999), 11–38.
40. Guinier, “Le mémoire comme projet de réforme”, 25.
41. J. Birgfeld, *Krieg und Aufklärung: Studien zum Kriegsdiskurs in der deutschsprachigen Literatur des 18. Jahrhunderts*, 2 vols. (Hannover: Wehrhahn, 2012).

42. H. Dréville, “Avant-propos”, in Dréville and Guinier, *Les lumières de la guerre*, 1:10.
43. J.-A.-H. comte de Guibert, *Essai général de tactique* (1772), in the *Discours préliminaire*, LXXXV.
44. M. Foucault, *Surveiller et punir: Naissance de la prison* (Paris: Gallimard, 1975), 196–197; for more on this issue, see Guinier, *L'honneur du soldat*.
45. J.-A.-H. comte de Guibert, *Défense du système de guerre moderne, ou Réfutation complète du Système de M. de Mesnil-Durand, par l'auteur de l'Essai général de tactique* (Neuchâtel, 1779), 2:244.
46. Guinier, *L'honneur du soldat*, 14; S. Loriga, *Soldats: Un laboratoire disciplinaire: l'armée piémontaise au XVIIIe siècle* (Paris: Menthé, 1991).
47. Guinier, *L'honneur du soldat*, 14.
48. J.-A.-H. comte de Guibert, *Stratégiques* (Paris: L'Herne, 1977), 376; see also E. Groffier, *Le stratège des Lumières: Le comte de Guibert (1743–1790)* (Paris: Honoré Champion, 2005), 43, 70–71, 74, and 160–161 on military discipline.
49. I. Deflers, “Die Militärreformen”, 411–432.
50. A. Guinier, “La quête d'une discipline éclairée”, in Dréville and Guinier, *Les lumières de la guerre*, 1:185–252.
51. Indeed, he knew how to take advantage of peacetime to deepen his personal education, which the multitude of theoretical texts he wrote admirably proves. At the end of his life, these constituted no fewer than 30 large boxes filled with notebooks he himself had written. In 1778 he contemplated writing a treatise on the art of war intended for the instruction of young officers, which he then had to abandon, however, due to lack of support from the ministry.
52. “If war is the profession of heroes, discipline is the arbiter of battles. Yes, in every state where the government is military, whose power, or position, demands a sizable militia, discipline is the bulwark, the nerve, and the support, the cause as it were of its successes and the basis of its greatness.” Maltzan, “Mémoire”, 194.
53. A. Guinier, “La quête”, 190.
54. “You who command French, sense everything that discipline can and must add to the singular resources of that national spirit which cannot be compared to any other.” Maltzan, “Mémoire”, 195.
55. “What! Our century claims the title of a philosophic century . . . it is rife with policies which seek to enlighten the nations, everything is thorough, everything is perfected, . . . at last, tactics are studied like any other art, things are invented and perfected, volumes pile up, each year an order is written, both the ancients and the moderns are called upon, and yet it has not been possible to establish this discipline without having recourse to military movements and tactical systems, which is to build on sand.” Maltzan, “Mémoire”, 195.
56. “Discipline raises man, the soldier above himself.” Ibid., 207.
57. “The esprit de corps has produced miracles at all times and will continue to do so.” Ibid., 223.
58. “Section VI: How to proceed with ease, with gentleness and infallibly in all required troop instructions and how to perfect it” (*Manière de procéder avec aisance, avec douceur et infailliblement à toute l'instruction nécessaire des soldats et de la perfectionner*), Ibid., 229–242.
59. “The man filled with love for his duties, the man in whom discipline will have developed honour and established subordination, will face the greatest dangers without fear and will fly to the most certain death. . . . Instruction and discipline are the bases of the profession.” Ibid., 219.

60. Maltzan, “Mémoire”, 244.
61. Deflers, “Vom Krieg lernen”, 621–637.
62. “Truth will lead my pen. Without truth, what would men be? As the sun is to the physical universe, so truth to the moral universe, which it supports and illuminates. Without it, genius casts but an uncertain and deceptive flame. Without it, kings, ministers, and writers are but illustrious blind men. I devote my works to it.” in Guibert, *Essai général de tactique*, 1:2–3.
63. Guibert, *Essai général de tactique*, 1:2.
64. Ibid., CVI, CXXVIII, CXXX, CIX, 23–24.
65. P.G. Joly de Maizeroy, *La Tactique discutée et réduite à ses véritables loix, avec les moyens de conserver les principes et des remarques sur diverses parties de la science de la guerre . . .* (Paris, 1773), XII.
66. See also the criticism of Guibert made by the engineering officer François-Philippe Loubat, Baron de Bohan (1751–1804), who certainly belonged to the generation of Guibert but was against the idea of discipline taking on a dominant role, turning soldiers thereby into machines; the criticism of the military engineer François-jean de Graindorge d’Orgeville, Baron de Mesnil-Durand (1729–1799), a conservative and great admirer of the Chevalier de Folard; the criticism of the colonel Guillaume Ayrrolles de Laissac, who spoke out against the *Prussianisation* of French discipline and in particular against the re-establishment of corporal punishment, in Deflers, “Vom Krieg lernen”, 621–637.
67. A. Guinier, “Le mémoire”, 111.
68. Ibid., 112.
69. Inter alios: C.F.O. von Diericke, “Über die Veredlung des Soldaten”, *Archiv für Aufklärung über das Soldatenwesen* 1 (1792): 66–80; 2 (1793): 17–37.
70. The term created by Joseph Servan (1741–1808) in his book: *Le soldat citoyen, ou Vues patriotiques sur la manière la plus avantageuse de pourvoir à la défense du royaume* (Dans le pays de la liberté, Neufchâtel, 1780) would become a great success during the Revolution; T. Hippler, *Soldats et citoyens: Naissance du service militaire en France et en Prusse* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 2006); A. Crépin, *Histoire de la conscription* (Paris: Gallimard, 2009).

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# 15 Writing on “The New Order”

## Ottoman Approaches to Late Eighteenth-Century Reforms

*Pascal Firges*

### Introduction

The master narrative of the history of the Ottoman Empire after the seventeenth century has for a long time been one of decline and fall. The great Ottoman reform efforts, undertaken at the end of the eighteenth and in the beginning of the nineteenth centuries were embedded into this narrative. Older scholarship has framed these reforms as being half-hearted and doomed to fail. They were half-hearted, because they did not fully embrace *modernity* – that is European modernity – as a model for every aspect of the Ottoman political and social system; and they failed, mainly because they were not comprehensive enough.<sup>1</sup>

In recent years, however, scholars of Ottoman history have paid more attention to the survival of a state that European observers deemed to be doomed at least since the 1770s.<sup>2</sup> After all, although European imperialism encroached on the Ottoman Empire from outside and although ethnic tensions destabilized it from inside, the Ottoman state did not collapse until after World War I. It thus ended in the same half-century which also saw the ruin of the Chinese, Russian, Austrian, German, Japanese, and British Empires. How could the Ottoman Empire resist the extreme internal and external pressures exerted on it? One facet of the answer was probably the pragmatic adaptability of the Ottoman state, which means its ability to introduce reforms.

This chapter aims at situating the Ottoman Empire in the general framework of languages of reform in the late eighteenth century. It does so by exploring the contents and the context of one of the first (if not the first) texts by an Ottoman author ever printed in the French language and thus aimed at a non-Ottoman political and intellectual audience. This text is a propagandistic treatise of about sixty pages entitled *Tableau des nouveaux règlements de l'Empire ottoman*, published in 1798, the year Napoleon invaded Egypt. Its author, Mahmud Raif Efendi, was a former secretary to the first permanent Ottoman embassy in London who would for five years (1800–1805) hold the post of *reis-iül-küttab* (the Ottoman equivalent of a foreign minister).<sup>3</sup>

This chapter will first give an introduction to the circumstances under which Mahmud Raif Efendi’s *Tableau* saw the light of the day. In this context, a small selection of influential treatises on reforming the Ottoman state will be analyzed in order to convey an impression of the discursive environment of Ottoman languages of reform. Next, the way late eighteenth-century Europeans perceived the Ottoman Empire will be briefly examined. In the end, the contents of Mahmud Raif Efendi’s treatise will be considered in the context of both the European discourse on the Ottoman Empire and the Ottoman reform discourse.

## 1. The Ottoman Reform Discourse

The eighteenth century had brought to an end Ottoman military superiority in Eastern Europe.<sup>4</sup> In 1768, the Ottomans entered into a disastrous war with Russia. The Russian armies made considerable conquests in southern Ukraine, an area which was subsequently called Noworossija. In 1774, the Ottomans were forced to accept the humiliating peace treaty of Küçük Kaynarca. Among other losses, the Ottoman state had to give up its suzerainty over the Crimea. After the Russian annexation of the Crimea, in 1783, a new Russian-Ottoman conflict began in 1787. One year later Austria entered the hostilities as an ally of Russia. The war turned into another defeat for the Ottoman armies. Luckily for the Ottomans, the victorious Austrians and Russians needed their armies elsewhere (at the borders of revolutionary France and in Poland) and therefore agreed to an almost status quo peace in 1791/92. Nevertheless, these two wars had made it clear to the Ottoman elites that their state could become the next Poland (which was partitioned in 1772, 1793, and 1795), if its military performance did not improve. As Jürgen Osterhammel observed for the nineteenth century, it was the (often military) competition between states which enhanced the pressure to undertake reforms.<sup>5</sup>

Consequently, Sultan Selim III, who had come to the throne in the midst of the war against Russia and Austria, embarked on a wide-ranging reform program.<sup>6</sup> In May 1789, a little over a month after his accession, the new sultan summoned a council of over two hundred notables, whom he asked to give him their opinions on the empire’s problems and about the ways to remedy them. After two days of deliberation, the sultan invited the notables to write detailed reports on their proposals of reform.<sup>7</sup> In the following years, over twenty reform proposals were discussed in the imperial council and many more submitted to the sultan.<sup>8</sup> In the light of the inferiority of the Ottoman armies in the last wars, priority was given to proposals on military reform and to administrative and fiscal reforms catering to an enhanced military expenditure.

The men who answered Sultan Selim’s call for proposals gave a considerable number of recommendations that are familiar from other European

reform discourses. Their great diversity notwithstanding, they were in general aiming at rationalization, systematization, and centralization of governance.<sup>9</sup> Stanford Shaw criticized the limitedness of these suggestions: “All of them went into great detail describing what was wrong with the Ottoman army, but invariably their only solutions were to restore the Janissaries and the Timar cavalry to the way they had worked successfully in the sixteenth century.”<sup>10</sup> This assessment, however, seems to conflict with a number of proposals mentioned in his book on Selim III: Here we find suggestions for a recruiting and promoting system for state officials based on ability, regular and systematic inspections, prohibition of the sale of offices,<sup>11</sup> and a better and regular payment to avoid corruption and idleness. There were suggestions for an empire-wide census,<sup>12</sup> the creation of a reserve army,<sup>13</sup> and “of provincial militias manned by a type of universal conscription among Anatolian peasants.”<sup>14</sup> Moreover, as Ali Yaycıoğlu points out, it is the use of words in these treatises that deserves attention: In spite of the very diverse contents of the proposals, a distinctive language of reform began to surface in the 1790s. The terms included those for *newness*, *cedid* (new) and *tecdid* (renewing), mingled with signifiers of order (*nizam*), ordering/regulating (*tanzim*), regimented (*tertib/tertibli*), aligning (*rabita*), disciplining (*terbiye*), repetitive drilling (*ta’lim*), and being well educated (*mu’allem*).<sup>15</sup>

Ambassadorial reports played an important role in the Ottoman reform discourse. After peace was made with Austria and Russia, Selim III started to send out men of his confidence as diplomats to several foreign courts. Fatih Yeşil suggests that these Ottoman diplomats had secret instructions to study and to report about the functioning of the state and society they were sent to.<sup>16</sup> As a result, Ahmed Azmi Efendi (sent to Prussia), Ebubekir Ratib Efendi (Austria), Mustafa Rasih Efendi (Russia), and Mahmud Raif Efendi (as secretary of the embassy to Britain) all produced comparable reports (albeit of different scope), analyzing the bureaucracy, the military, and the socio-economic functioning of the state they had been sent to. Although ambassadorial reports (*sefaretname*) were nothing new in Ottoman diplomacy, Fatih Yeşil argues that while reports of the early eighteenth century described the states of Western Europe merely as objects of curiosity, by the end of the eighteenth century they had become an object of study.<sup>17</sup>

Moreover, these ambassadorial reports of the 1790s were often written with the clear intent to describe foreign states as possible models of reform. Ahmed Azmi Efendi, for example, presented in detail an idealized Prussia of Frederic the Great, in which the ministers lived a frugal life without luxury and corruption, where government follows an economic policy that favors domestic production, and where an industrious population cultivates the land, which is protected by a well-disciplined army.<sup>18</sup>

According to Virginia Aksan, Ebubekir Ratib Efendi was probably the most influential reformer in the entourage of Selim III.<sup>19</sup> A former teacher

of the sultan, Ebubekir Ratib had also worked for the foreign policy bureaucracy of the Ottoman state and he had gained some experience with European political concepts and languages. He was sent as ambassador to Vienna with the special task to study Austrian governmental and administrative institutions. After his return, in summer 1792, Ebubekir Ratib submitted an extensive report which was not only a comprehensive analysis of the Austrian military, social order, and structures of government, but also a reform manifesto.<sup>20</sup> During only 153 days in Vienna, the ambassador and his staff (over one hundred persons) compiled a text that according to Carter Findley would fill over five hundred pages in print.<sup>21</sup> Again, Austria was portrayed as a well-organized state. This way of depicting an ideal image, rather than a *naturalistic* one, seems to be partly due to the propagandistic character of the treatise and partly due to the encyclopedic aim of the text, which was to give a complete description of the functioning of the social, political, and above all military system of the Habsburg state.<sup>22</sup> For such an almost mechanistic account, it was more important to show how things were regulated and how they were intended to work. Findley speaks in this context of the *technocratic mentality* of the Ottoman ambassador, analyzing what he sees “with an engineer’s or manager’s eye”:<sup>23</sup>

One of the most interesting aspects of Ebubekir Ratib Efendi’s report is how, in a historical section of the treatise, he presents a version of a better-past argument through which he justifies a reform that partly breaks with the past: In his historical analysis, he claims that Ottoman sultans of the empire’s great days had always added new rules for their state and military as they considered necessary:

Later rulers, however, grew proud and complacent. They neglected to preserve this legacy of adding new regulations and laws to the old ones when needed. The result was that military forces and civil affairs fell into decline until the old military forces survived only in name.<sup>24</sup>

Then the Ottoman ambassador continued to explain that European states were undergoing a reform process which he called *Nizam-i Cedid* (new order, new regulations): Frederic II of Prussia had been more successful than others in reforming his armies and thus was able to successfully annex some Austrian provinces (Silesia), which awoke the Austrians who themselves embarked on a reform program (under Joseph II), hiring foreign experts and drawing from other countries’ military regulations.<sup>25</sup> Therefore, the Ottomans also had to create their own *Nizam-i Cedid* if they wanted to be able to compete with the other states of Europe. And indeed, *Nizam-i Cedid* was the terminology under which the reforms of Selim III became known.

The reforms which Selim III introduced during his reign aimed at a more systematic application of the four-eyes principle in public spending,

clear-cut responsibilities for officials,<sup>26</sup> the abolishment of sinecures, and standardized regulations for different compartments of the military and the state administration.<sup>27</sup> Moreover, during Selim's reign, and especially during the 1790s, the Ottoman Empire witnessed the creation of an improved arms industry, the construction of a state-of-the-art navy, the foundation of educational institutions for the diffusion of technological expertise, and the creation of a whole new army, trained along European lines, through the employment of foreign experts.<sup>28</sup> To finance these reforms, a new treasury was established, applying new methods of accounting and creating revenue by directly exploiting tax farms that had fallen back to the sultan.<sup>29</sup> From 1802 onwards, a military conscription system was set up in Anatolia and a provincial militia trained. By the end of 1806, the new European-style army counted nearly 23,000 men and over 1,500 officers.<sup>30</sup> These were the troops the sultan had employed successfully in Palestine to block Napoleon's march from Egypt northward into Syria in 1799.<sup>31</sup>

## 2. The European Discourse on Despotism, Stagnation, and Ruin

What did Europeans read and write about the Ottoman Empire at the end of the eighteenth century? A good starting point for gaining a rough overview of some elements of the discourse on the Ottoman Empire is Franco Venturi's *The End of the Old Regime in Europe*. For this study of public discourses in the late eighteenth century, Venturi mainly used Italian newspaper reports of the 1780s. These reports provide a very inconsistent picture of the state of the Ottoman Empire. Some announce tremendous efforts at reform, while others denounce the intrinsic backwardness of the empire and the fanaticism of its inhabitants. The Ottoman Empire, it seems from these reports, was on the verge of collapse. Venturi cites four instances in which an imminent general revolution was reported in the years between 1782 and 1787.<sup>32</sup> The newspaper articles cited by Venturi were often extracts from letters written by diverse corresponding authors. Apparently these were all Europeans living in or visiting the Ottoman Empire. All of them had made up their own explanations why this once mighty empire had become so weak in recent decades, especially in comparison with its northern neighbors. Some saw the main cause to be the Ottomans' *Asiatic softness* and their lack of diligence and activity.<sup>33</sup> Some blamed their turbulent spirit or their religion from the deserts of Arabia, making them *unsociable individuals*.<sup>34</sup>

According to Aslı Çırakman, during the eighteenth century, the European mainstream discourse on the Ottoman Empire developed into a relatively coherent and decidedly negative judgment of the *Turks*, compared to previous centuries.<sup>35</sup>

Although this discourse was informed by a great number of authors, I would like to quickly mention only three particularly influential ones: Montesquieu, Tott, and Volney. Montesquieu is important, because in his *De l'Esprit des Lois* (1748) he combined his political thinking with a theory according to which it is the climate that forms the character of a people. From this he inferred that despotism was "naturalized" in Asia.<sup>36</sup> Thus despotism was presented as an inherently *oriental* form of government. The concept "suggested a static and slavish society, a backward and corrupt polity, with arbitrary and ferocious rulers governing servile and timid subjects".<sup>37</sup> This view dominated the representation of the *Orient* and in particular the Ottoman Empire for a long time.<sup>38</sup>

Another highly influential work on the Ottoman Empire was François de Tott's *Mémoires du baron de Tott, sur les turcs et les tartares* (1784). Tott had spent long years in the Ottoman Empire, first as employee of the French embassy and then as military advisor. For Tott, it was not only the climate but its combination with despotic government and the religious fanaticism of the Turks that blocked enlightenment and reform in the Ottoman Empire:

Si le climat que les Turcs habitent, relâche leurs fibres, le despotisme auquel ils sont soumis les porte à la violence; ils sont quelquefois féroces. L'opinion de la prédestination ajoute à leur férocité et ce préjugé qui dans un climat froid les eut rendu braves, dans un climat chaud ne les conduit qu'à la témérité et au fanatisme. Cette fièvre chaude que les exalte, leur fait toujours compter pour rien, tout ce qui n'est pas turc, et de cette manière de compter avec soi-même résulte nécessairement l'orgueil et l'ignorance.<sup>39</sup>

Tott's long sojourn in the Ottoman Empire lent his analysis authority. So much so that even at the end of the twentieth century, Franco Venturi could still write that "his experience permitted him to write one of the most important books of the late eighteenth century on the problems of the political and technical transformation of lands on the margins of Europe".<sup>40</sup> According to Virginia Aksan, however, "the *Memoirs* appeared in the midst of much imaginative rendering of the East, and have to be used with skepticism and only when corroborated".<sup>41</sup> Nevertheless, they "underpin every history of the eighteenth-century Ottoman Empire written since. . . . Even now, two centuries later, one cannot read recent work on the period without encountering Tott's writings".<sup>42</sup>

The discourse on the alleged incapability of the Ottomans to reform and improve their empire prepared the ground for imperialist argumentations, calling for rational Europeans to take over and to bring civilization in the form of colonial enterprises, dismembering the Ottoman Empire. Constantin-François Volney was a principal exponent for such argumentations. A short passage of his *Les Ruines, ou méditation sur les*

*révolutions des empires*, in which he criticized French sympathies for the Ottoman Empire during the war with Russia in 1788, clearly reveals the disdain that Volney cultivated regarding the Ottomans:<sup>43</sup>

Il y avait en 1788 un phénomène moral bien singulier en Europe. Un grand peuple, jaloux de la liberté, s'était épris de passion pour un peuple qui en est l'ennemi; un peuple ami des arts pour un peuple qui les déteste; un peuple tolérant et doux pour un peuple persécuteur et fanatique; un peuple sociable et gai pour un peuple sombre et *haisseur*: en un mot, les français s'étaient épris de passion pour les turcs[.]<sup>44</sup>

Another book, written by Volney during the same war, in 1788, praised the prospect of a Russian conquest of the Ottoman Empire:

quelle plus noble ambition que celle d'affranchir des peuples nombreux du joug du fanatisme et de la tyrannie! De rappeler les sciences et les arts dans leur terre natale [he refers to Greece]; d'ouvrir une nouvelle carrière à la législation, au commerce, à l'industrie!<sup>45</sup>

The general eighteenth-century discourse on the inability of the Ottoman Empire to reform had massive short- and long-term consequences for the entire Middle East. Volney is “said to have been Napoleon Bonaparte’s primer on the Middle East in 1798–1799”.<sup>46</sup> The arguments of Montesquieu, Tott, Volney, and many others were brought forward in policy debates, for example during the so-called Ochakov Crisis in 1791, when the British parliament discussed a possible intervention in support of the Ottoman Empire in order to force Russia to settle on a status quo peace. In the end, the British government, which favored an intervention, had to back down. During the debate, and especially in the pamphlet literature surrounding it, the many tried and tested anti-Ottoman arguments were applied against the government’s pro-Ottoman stance.<sup>47</sup>

### 3. Mahmud Raif Efendi’s Tableau Des Nouveaux Règlements De l’Empire Ottoman

The Ottoman reformers around Selim III were aware of the strong European resentments towards them. Ebubekir Ratib Efendi, for example, reported how he tried to challenge such prejudices, by ostentatiously showing a different behavior than the one expected from Ottomans:

[According to the Austrians,] the Ottomans are conceited, arrogant, and self-satisfied and it is generally known that because of their pride and haughtiness, they inquire into nothing and they approve of nothing [foreign] and their pride prevents them from acquiring

knowledge[.] Your humble servant [Ratib Efendi] attempted to change their opinion by taking an interest in everything in the minutest detail and since arriving at this place [an arsenal close to Vienna] showing the greatest pleasure in observing all things no matter how trivial, without displaying the slightest sign of boredom or tedium, and when discussing things through question and answer and praising their way of organizing things [*nizam*], they showed great pleasure and made no attempt to hide anything from me.<sup>48</sup>

It is in this context of Ottoman awareness about the European anti-Ottoman discourse that I suggest we should interpret the Ottoman treatise, which was published in Istanbul in 1798 with the title *Tableau des nouveaux règlements de l’Empire ottoman*. The author, Mahmud Raif Efendi, was a member of the sultan’s reforming entourage. Having received his education in the central administration of the Ottoman Empire, he was appointed chief secretary of the first permanent Ottoman embassy, established in London in 1793, where he stayed for three years and learned French. As a result, he could write his embassy report himself in French (at least so he claimed).<sup>49</sup> Later, he held several important government positions, the most prominent being for five years the Ottoman equivalent of a foreign minister.<sup>50</sup>

In the preface to his book, Mahmud Raif explains that during his stay in Britain he had studied the system of finances of European states, their military, as well as all aspects of government.<sup>51</sup> The reason for writing his book was that Europeans were ignorant of the true state of the *forces and the revenues of the Ottoman Empire*, as no publication had hitherto provided correct notions about them.<sup>52</sup> The purpose of his treatise was thus to enlighten the European public about the reform process in the Ottoman Empire under Selim III. Mahmud Raif then goes on to contextualize his sultan’s reforms with an interesting mixture of an *ancient constitution* argument, justifying reform as a return to an ideal past, and the claim that change was God’s will and that reform would always render a state more powerful:

Les décrets éternels de la providence assurent à l’Empire ottoman une éternelle existence et une prospérité brillante. Des preuves innombrables tirées de la tradition et des lumières de la raison confirment dans cette idée consolante toutes les personnes sensées et surtout celles qui ont des connaissances historiques. En effet, toutes les fois que la monarchie ottomane a éprouvé quelqu’atteinte dans sa constitution politique, l’Être suprême qui daigne veiller à sa conservation, a aussitôt fait naître un grand personnage qui, par sa sagesse et son habileté a eu le bonheur de lui rendre sa première force. Il est même à remarquer que la constitution de l’état n’a jamais été aussi brillante qu’à la suite de quelque altération.<sup>53</sup>

And a little further:

notre Auguste Souverain . . . n'ayant d'autre ambition que celle de rendre ses peuples heureux, s'était occupé avant même son glorieux avènement, des moyens les plus propres à réformer le plutôt possible les divers abus qui s'étaient glissés dans le gouvernement.<sup>54</sup>

This then is the standard wording of Mahmud Raif when he writes about the shortcomings within the Ottoman state and military: Some abuses had slipped in over time. He uses the word *glisser* in almost all instances in which he writes about abuses. According to the author, the institutions of the Ottoman Empire had slipped over time from an ideal into a corrupted state and it was now the sultan's task to restore the strength of the Ottoman Empire. Stanford Shaw had criticized Ottoman reforms before the nineteenth century as mere "efforts to restore the past".<sup>55</sup> Yet, we should not make the mistake of taking the languages of reform for the reforms themselves. As we have seen, Selim's reforms may have been intended to restore the Ottoman Empire to its former greatness, but the means employed for that purpose were inspired not by the past but by other contemporary states.

The rhetoric of restoring the past or of regenerating the nation where not absent from contemporary Western European discourses, either. As Isabelle Deflers has shown in a recent article, late eighteenth-century French military reformers also considered radical reforms as detrimental to the strength of the army and would advocate reforms that would enable existing structures to recover their former military force, instead of creating new ones. And also here, the ideal state of the army lay in the past – in the French case it was the *Grand Siècle* (the seventeenth century).<sup>56</sup> Deflers' case study is particularly interesting in this context, as she analyzes a French military commission that was sent to Prussia in 1786 to study the Prussian army. The French officers' mission was therefore not unlike the missions of the Ottoman diplomats mentioned earlier.

These French officers were warning against copying foreign models without adapting them to the *genius of the French nation*.<sup>57</sup> Adapting foreign models to local circumstances was certainly also in the Ottoman case a crucial aspect of the reform process. For example, Ottoman reformers under Selim III did not depart from the Islamic religious framework for the *Nizam-i Cedid* army. Instead, Islamic teaching for soldiers was framed in such a way as to serve the reformist agenda, as Ali Yaycioğlu points out:

By suppressing the self (*islah-i nef*s), mental training based on religious texts helped make soldiers docile parts of a hierarchical order. The orthodox religious education given soldiers of the New Order in the new baroque mosques in Üsküdar under the supervision of

imams contrasted with the rituals of the janissaries, who met haphazardly in wooden lodges under the spiritual leaders of the Bektaşı order, where elements of Sunni and Shi'a Islam, and even Christianity, were combined in syncretic ways.<sup>58</sup>

Ottoman reformers around Selim III not only adapted the *Nizam-i Cedit* to the social and cultural configurations of the Ottoman state. They also adjusted the ways they promoted their new policies to different groups of recipients. Thus, for example, the author of the pamphlet *Hulasat ül-kelam fi redd ül-avamm* (Concise Statement to Refute the Populace), a man named Koca Sekbanbaşı<sup>59</sup> declared that it was his intention to "help ordinary people understand . . . the virtues of the New Order". The pamphlet was therefore written in everyday language, and it discussed and refuted negative opinions about the reforms as they may have circulated in the streets of Istanbul.<sup>60</sup> Koca Sekbanbaşı argued for the necessity of gathering intelligence from foreign states,

since we are instructed by the example of so many states that owed their loss of reputation and ruin to the want of care in observing the machinations of their enemies and in neglecting to provide in proper time efficient troops and military stores.<sup>61</sup>

Moreover, he emphasized the legitimacy of reforms in an Islamic context and gave a long description of the organization and the functioning of the new troops.<sup>62</sup>

Another example for adapting propaganda for the New Order to specific audiences is the pamphlet of the preacher Ubeydullah Kuşmani, *Zebire-i Kuşmani fi tarif-i nizam-i İlhami* (Letter of Kuşmani Explaining the Order of İlhami).<sup>63</sup> This treatise took a more scholarly moral and religious stance. The text featured "Arabic and Persian quotations from the Qu'ran, Hadith, and Persian dictums and poetry".<sup>64</sup> Moreover it included Islamic legal reasoning, arguing that learning and adopting foreign innovations were a religious and moral obligation and that tradition could and had to be overruled in order to find answers to contemporary problems. Religious reasoning, as we have seen in numerous examples now, was an intrinsic part of Ottoman languages of reform. The Ottoman reform discourse at the end of the eighteenth century was neither anti-religious nor nonreligious. In fact, as Ali Yaycioğlu argues, "religion became an essential component of the reform discourse".<sup>65</sup>

The two examples of reform propaganda towards an Ottoman audience reveal some interesting points of comparison with Mahmud Raif Efendi's *Tableau*. While the purpose of the pamphlets of Koca Sekbanbaşı and Ubeydullah Kuşmani consisted in justifying foreign-inspired reform to a local audience, Mahmud Raif's treatise tries to convey a convincing image of the Ottoman adoption of foreign innovations to a foreign audience.

The *Tableau* is thus the product of a twofold process of transculturation: First, reforms were inspired from Europe, then adapted to the Ottoman Empire, and then again presented to a European audience. Moreover, whereas the pamphlets for internal propaganda are structured by their argumentation, the communicative strategy of the Mahmud Raif's text is not to engage with the arguments of the other side, but to give the impression of an objective, orderly fact book. Already the chosen title of *Tableau* refers to a systematic description of an object.<sup>66</sup>

The main text of the book consists of a collection of fifteen ordinances for different branches of state administration and military: ordinances for the new treasury, for the provisioning of the armies and the capital, for the Janissaries, for diverse artillery units, for gunpowder production, for various military transport units, for military miners, for the admiralty, for several fortresses, and finally the ordinance for the new army corps "discipliné à l'européenne".<sup>67</sup> These ordinances were combined with twenty-seven engravings, visualizing the material results of the *Nizam-i Cedit*, both in the form of plans and as perspective views: new barracks, fortresses, cannons, factories, and ships.<sup>68</sup> Thus the structured arrangement of the book was probably meant to confer to the readers the orderly spirit of the *Nizam-i Cedit* – a spirit which in an age of absolutist enlightenment reforms many would find quite familiar.

## Conclusion

During the second half of the eighteenth century, processes of reform took place almost simultaneously throughout Europe.<sup>69</sup> The New Order of the Ottoman Empire was one manifestation of developments during this age of revolutions and reform. The languages of reform connected to the policies under Selim III are thus shedding light on the transcultural dimension of late eighteenth-century reforms. Members of the entourage of the sultan saw themselves as participants in a greater process that also encompassed many other states. This identification with reform or the New Order (*Nizam-i Cedit*) can be seen as one aspect of the Ottoman elites' engagement with cultural practices of the European Enlightenment.<sup>70</sup>

The European discourse, however, constructed the *Orient* in general and the Ottoman state in particular as the exact opposite to the civilization of enlightenment. Leading authors depicted the Ottoman Empire as a static society in which ignorance and corruption were endemic. And even some twentieth-century specialists of Ottoman reform could not entirely free themselves from conducting a Eurocentric and somewhat anachronistic deficit analysis when assessing the *Nizam-i Cedit*.

Ottoman awareness of the European discourse on the Ottoman Empire and of the potentially very grave consequences for the security of the Ottoman state were, I suggest, one of the main reasons for the

publication of Mahmud Raif Efendi’s propagandistic treatise *Tableau des nouveaux règlements de l’Empire ottoman*.<sup>71</sup> The discourse of the *unreformability* of the Ottoman Empire could serve as a pretext for intervention and conquest. If the Ottoman Empire was a despotic state, incapable of true reform, then a more enlightened state had the right to conquer it and to bring civilization. It should be mentioned that in the long term, demanding reform became a leitmotif of Euro-Ottoman relations and an important device of imperialist interference in the Ottoman Empire throughout the long nineteenth century. Therefore, the propaganda for an enlightened and reforming Ottoman state became vital. Ottoman officials were entrusted with transmitting the treatise to various courts in Europe.<sup>72</sup> The existence of copies of the work in diverse European libraries suggests a readiness of the Ottomans to distribute it widely. Later, in 1802, it was also reprinted in Berlin and translated into German.

In the end, Selim III and Mahmud Raif Efendi had to pay dearly for their reforming enthusiasm. Both were killed during a Janissary revolt in 1807 that supposedly started when Mahmud Raif had ordered the garrison of a fortress near Istanbul to wear European-style uniforms.<sup>73</sup>

## Notes

1. See for example B. Lewis, *The Emergence of Modern Turkey* (London: Oxford University Press, 1961); N. Berkes, *The Development of Secularism in Turkey* (Montreal: McGill University Press, 1964); S.J. Shaw, *Between Old and New: The Ottoman Empire Under Sultan Selim III, 1789–1807* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1971); S.J. Shaw, “The Transition from Traditionalistic to Modern Reform in the Ottoman Empire: The Reigns of Sultan Selim III (1789–1807) and Sultan Mahmud II (1808–1839)”, in *The Turks*, ed. H.C. Güzel, C.C. Oğuz, and O. Karatay (Ankara: Yeni Türkiye Yayınları, 2002), 4:130–149.
2. V. Aksan, “Breaking the Spell of the Baron de Tott: Reframing the Question of Military Reform in the Ottoman Empire, 1760–183”, *The International History Review* 24 (2002): 253–277; V. Aksan, *Ottoman Wars 1700–1870: An Empire Besieged* (Harlow: Longman; Pearson, 2007); K. Şakul, “An Ottoman Global Moment: War of Second Coalition in the Levant (Ph.D. dissertation, Georgetown University, 2009); A. Yaycıoğlu, *Partners of the Empire: The Crisis of the Ottoman Order in the Age of Revolutions* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2017).
3. M.A. Yalçınkaya, “Mahmud Raif Efendi as the Chief Secretary of Yusuf Agah Efendi, the First Permanent Ottoman Turkish Ambassador to London 1793–1797”, *OTAM* 5 (1994): 421.
4. C.A. Bayly, *The Birth of the Modern World, 1780–1914: Global Connections and Comparisons* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2004), 90.
5. J. Osterhammel, *Die Verwandlung der Welt: eine Geschichte des 19. Jahrhunderts*, 5th ed. (Munich: Beck, 2010), 895.
6. This does not mean that there had been no reforms before Selim III. Nevertheless, the reforms of Selim III were much more comprehensive than were those of his predecessors. For a concise introduction into some of the general characteristics of the Ottoman state and the reforms under Selim III, see Yaycıoğlu, *Partners of the Empire*, 19–63.

7. Shaw, *Old and New*, 73–75; Yaycıoğlu, *Partners of the Empire*, 39.
8. Shaw, *Old and New*, 91.
9. This was very much in line with global trends at reforming, cf. Osterhammel, *Verwandlung der Welt*, 896.
10. Shaw, “Transition”, 133.
11. Shaw, *Old and New*, 99.
12. Ibid., 106.
13. Ibid., 100.
14. Ibid., 106.
15. Yaycıoğlu, *Partners of the Empire*, 47.
16. F. Yeşil, “The Transformation of the Ottoman Diplomatic Mind: The Emergence of Licensed Espionage”, *Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde des Morgenlandes* 101 (2011): 469.
17. Ibid., 468. On *sefaretname* in general, including a comprehensive bibliography, see E. Yurdusev, “Studying Ottoman Diplomacy: A Review of the Sources”, in *Ottoman Diplomacy: Conventional or Unconventional?* ed. A.N. Yurdusev (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 175–179.
18. See G. Karamuk, *Ahmed Azmi Efendis Gesandtschaftsbericht als Zeugnis des osmanischen Machtverfalls und der beginnenden Reformära unter Selim III* (Bern: Peter Lang, 1975), 249–279.
19. V. Aksan, “Ottoman Political Writing, 1768–1808”, *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 25 (1993): 63.
20. Shaw, *Old and New*, 90; Yeşil, “Transformation”, 473.
21. C.V. Findley, Ebu Bekir Ratib’s Vienna Embassy Narrative: Discovering Austria or Propagandizing for Reform in Istanbul?” *Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde des Morgenlandes* 85 (1995): 42.
22. More than eighty percent of the text was dedicated to military organization. See Ibid., 46.
23. Ibid., 42.
24. Ibid., 51. This is Findley’s paraphrase.
25. Ibid., 52; Shaw, *Old and New*, 98; Also in recent historiography, Prussia under Frederic II and Austria under Joseph II are still considered to be typical examples of reforming states of the eighteenth century. See Osterhammel, *Verwandlung der Welt*, 895.
26. Shaw, *Old and New*, 113.
27. Ibid., 114.
28. For an excellent account of the *Nizam-i Cedid* in general and the military reforms in particular, see V. Aksan, *Ottoman Wars 1700–1870: An Empire Besieged* (Harlow: Routledge, 2007), 180–258; on Franco-Ottoman military cooperation during the French Revolution, see P. Firges, “Gunners for the Sultan: French Revolutionary Efforts to Modernize the Ottoman Military”, in *Well-Connected Domains: Towards an Entangled Ottoman History*, ed. P. Firges, et al. (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 171–187.
29. Shaw, *Old and New*, 128–131; As in France, tax farming was an eighteenth-century development, see Yaycıoğlu, *Partners of the Empire*, 29.
30. Shaw, *Old and New*, 132.
31. Ibid., 135.
32. F. Venturi, *The End of the Old Regime in Europe, 1776–1789: Republican Patriotism and the Empires of the East* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1991), 2:853–855, 861.
33. Ibid., 854.
34. Ibid., 855.
35. A. Çırakman, *From the ‘Terror of the World’ to the ‘Sick Man of Europe’: European Images of Ottoman Empire and Society from the Sixteenth Century*

- to the Nineteenth* (New York, NY: Peter Lang, 2002), 3–4; A. Çırakman, “From Tyranny to Despotism: The Enlightenment’s Unenlightened Image of the Turks”, *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 33 (2001): 49; See also E.W. Said, *Orientalism: Western Concepts of the Orient* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1978); A. Fikret and K. Schneiderheinze, “Das Osmanische Reich als orientalische Despotie in der Wahrnehmung des Westens im 18.-19. Jahrhundert”, in *Türkei und Europa: Facetten einer Beziehung in Vergangenheit und Gegenwart*, ed. E. Kürşat-Ahlers (Frankfurt am Main: IKO-Verlag für Interkulturelle Kommunikation, 2001), 83–122; T.E. Kaiser, “The Evil Empire? The Debate on Turkish Despotism in Eighteenth-Century French Political Culture”, *The Journal of Modern History* 72 (2000): 6–34; F. Venturi, “Oriental Despotism”, *Journal of the History of Ideas* 24 (1963): 133–142; C. Windler, *La diplomatie comme expérience de l’autre: Consuls français au Maghreb 1700–1840* (Geneva: Droz, 2002), 364–366.
36. C.L.d.S.d. Montesquieu, *De l’Esprit des lois* (Paris: Garnier, 1961), 1:68.
  37. Çırakman, “From Tyranny to Despotism”, 56.
  38. One of the most eminent eighteenth-century critics of the concept of despotism, Abraham-Hyacinthe Anquetil-Duperron, argued for example that it would suffice to critically engage with Montesquieu’s theory, as Montesquieu had *in a way fixed the ideas on the nature of despotism* and that later authors had only been copying him. See A.H. Anquetil-Duperron, *Legislation orientale* (Amsterdam: Rey, 1778), 9.
  39. F.d. Tott, *Mémoires du baron de Tott, sur les turcs et les tartares* (Amsterdam, 1784), 1:14–15.
  40. Venturi, *End of the Old Regime*, 3:857.
  41. Aksan, “Breaking the Spell”, 262.
  42. Ibid., 255–256.
  43. On Franco-Ottoman relations at the end of the eighteenth century, see P. Firges, *French Revolutionaries in the Ottoman Empire: Political Culture, Diplomacy, and the Limiting of Universal Revolution, 1792–1798* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017).
  44. C.-F. Volney, *Les Ruines, ou méditation sur les révolutions des empires: Par M. Volney, député à l’Assemblée nationale de 1789* (Paris, 1791), 102. Emphasis in original.
  45. C.-F. Volney, *Considérations sur la guerre actuelle des turcs* (London, 1788), 44.
  46. Aksan, “Breaking the Spell”, 255.
  47. P. Firges, *Großbritannien und das Osmanische Reich Ende des 18. Jahrhunderts: Europäische Gleichgewichtspolitik und geopolitische Strategien* (Annweiler: Sonnenberg, 2009), 88–147.
  48. Ebubekir Ratib Efendi, *Viyana Sefaretnamesi*, fol. 192b, in Yeşil, “Transformation”, 474.
  49. For an English translation of his embassy report, entitled “Journal du voyage de Mahmoud Raif Efendi en Angleterre, écrit par lui-même”, see Yalçınkaya, “Mahmud Raif Efendi”, 422–434. Having found an Ottoman Turkish manuscript version of the *Tableau des nouveaux règlements de l’Empire ottoman*, Kemal Beydili expressed some doubts if Mahmud Raif had actually composed the French version himself. See J. Strauss, “Le livre français d’Istanbul (1730–1908)”, *Revue des mondes musulmans et de la Méditerranée* 87–88 (1999): 279.
  50. Yalçınkaya, “Mahmud Raif Efendi”, 421.
  51. Mahmud Raif Efendi, *Tableau des nouveaux règlements de l’Empire Ottoman* (Istanbul, 1798), 4.
  52. Ibid.

53. Ibid., 7.
54. Ibid., 8.
55. Shaw, *Old and New*, 6.
56. I. Deflers, “Französische Berichte von einer ‘Studienreise’ über das preußische Militär im Jahre 1786”, *Historische Zeitschrift* 302 (2016): 630–632.
57. Ibid., 639.
58. Yaycioğlu, *Partners of the Empire*, 50.
59. His identity is unknown, but according to Ali Yaycioğlu, the name may have evoked among Ottoman readers the impression that the pamphlet was written by a senior Janissary officer and thus insinuate that also Janissaries supported the *Nizam-i Cedid*. See Ibid., 57; According to Virginia Aksan, “Sekbanbaşı in this period was the name for one of the commanding officers of the palace troops, second only to the commander of the Janissaries.” See Aksan, “Ottoman Political Writing”, 68.
60. Yaycioğlu, *Partners of the Empire*, 57.
61. Cairo University manuscript 6548T, fol. 60, in Aksan, “Ottoman Political Writing”, 69.
62. Ibid., 62.
63. İlhami was the pen name of Selim III. The treatise of Koca Sekbanbaşı and the treatise of Ubeydullah Kuşmani were both written around 1805 and 1806. See Yaycioğlu, *Partners of the Empire*, 57.
64. Ibid., 59.
65. Ibid., 60–61.
66. A well-known contemporary example for such a text would be Mercier’s *Tableau de Paris* (1781).
67. Mahmud Raif Efendi, *Tableau des nouveaux règlements*, 55.
68. On the use of Mahmud Raif Efendi’s book as a source for studying Ottoman naval reforms, see T. Zorlu, *Innovation and Empire in Turkey: Sultan Selim III and the Modernisation of the Ottoman Navy* (London: Tauris, 2008).
69. S. Meurer, “A System of Oeconomy: Approaches to Public Administration in Britain and British India at the Beginning of the Age of Reform” (Ph.D. dissertation, Heidelberg University, 2014), 414.
70. Cf. C. Herzog, “Aufklärung und Osmanisches Reich: Annäherung an ein historiographisches Problem”, in *Die Aufklärung und ihre Weltwirkung*, ed. W. Hardtwig (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2010), 297–298; See also Yaycioğlu, *Partners of the Empire*, 35.
71. As Jürgen Osterhammel argues, also the Bourbon reforms in the Spanish colonial empire after 1759 were partly serving the propagandistic purpose of changing the reputation of Spain as a *backward* state. See Osterhammel, *Verwandlung der Welt*, 895.
72. I. Fliter, “From Delegates to Diplomats: The Ottoman Diplomatic Office in Prussia (1763–1808)” (Ph.D. dissertation, Tel Aviv University, 2016), 221. I would like to thank Irena Fliter for this reference and her helpful comments on my chapter.
73. Shaw, *Old and New*, 378.

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## Section V

# Reflecting on Reform



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# 16 Reform, Revolution, and the Republican Tradition

## The Case of the Batavian Republic

*Wyger R.E. Velema*

### Introduction

In his tantalisingly vague but nonetheless richly suggestive Trevelyan Lectures, delivered in 1969, the Italian historian Franco Venturi famously contended that the European republican tradition was of crucial importance for an adequate understanding of most if not all eighteenth-century strivings for political reform and, ultimately, political revolution.<sup>1</sup> Venturi's emphasis on the relevance of the republican tradition was clearly and explicitly directed against what by then had become the historiographical mainstream. In widely read syntheses by, among others, R.R. Palmer and Peter Gay, the ubiquitous late eighteenth-century impulse for political reform and revolution was primarily attributed to an Enlightenment conceived of as both unitary and unambiguously modern.<sup>2</sup> With his claim that the roots of eighteenth-century reformism were to be sought in a much older republican tradition, Venturi in effect reopened the whole debate on the nature of eighteenth-century reform and revolution. Seminal as it would prove to be, his invocation of the republican tradition was at the same time in many ways baffling. It is safe to say that it raised more questions than it answered. In the first place, Venturi did not succeed in making it clear what exactly was to be understood by the republican tradition. At times he seemed to regard it as being about institutional similarities between the actually existing and still surviving early modern republics; at other moments, however, he claimed that the idea of the republic had, in the course of the eighteenth century, become almost completely divorced from its original institutional anchoring and was primarily living on as, or being transformed into, "a republican morale".<sup>3</sup> Secondly, and for reasons that have often been attributed to his aversion to the fascist uses of classical antiquity he witnessed as a young man, he was adamant that the early modern republican tradition had very little if anything to do with the ancient world. The overwhelming presence of classical references in early modern and eighteenth-century republican thought he summarily dismissed as purely ornamental.<sup>4</sup> Finally, Venturi's suggestions about the enduring eighteenth-century importance of the

republican tradition suffered from a lack of chronological specificity. On the one hand, in a passage explicitly aimed at R.R. Palmer's views, he maintained, it is far more worthwhile to follow the involvement, modifications and dispersion of the republican tradition in the last years of the eighteenth century, than to examine the emergence of the idea of democracy in those same years". On the other hand, he discerned in those very same years of revolution the beginnings of "a completely different historical cycle".<sup>5</sup>

Despite its many loose ends and ambiguities, however, in retrospect it is evident that Venturi's *Utopia and Reform* was an important harbinger of the *republican turn* in the study of the early modern period in general and of the eighteenth century in particular. Since the publication of Venturi's Trevelyan Lectures a seemingly endless stream of publications has been devoted to early modern and eighteenth-century varieties of republicanism, variously labelled as *civic humanism*, *classical republicanism*, and the *neo-Roman theory of liberty*.<sup>6</sup> Although these studies have adopted Venturi's emphasis on the importance of the republican tradition, they have focused less than he did on institutions and practical politics and have generally been mainly concerned with republican thought and discourse. They have also, almost without exception, argued that Venturi was misguided in declaring the ancient element in early modern republican reflection to be little more than ornamental. Indeed, whatever their differences, both John Pocock and Quentin Skinner have convincingly insisted that early modern republican thought was rooted in the classics. A matter on which not even a beginning of scholarly agreement has been reached, however, is that of the outer chronological limits of the republican tradition. Despite decades of research Venturi's inability to bring this problem to a solution still seems to be with us today. John Pocock, who memorably described the American Revolution as the *last act of the civic Renaissance*, thereby implicitly suggested that the *Atlantic republican tradition* played little or no role in the subsequent late eighteenth-century European revolutions.<sup>7</sup> Quentin Skinner has shown himself rather reluctant to discuss the relationship between neo-Roman thought and the revolutions of the later eighteenth century in any detail. The eighteenth-century rise of classical utilitarianism and liberalism, he simply tells us, meant that "the theory of free states fell increasingly into disrepute, and eventually slipped almost wholly out of sight".<sup>8</sup> The drift of most of these arguments seems to be that at some point in the final decades of the eighteenth century republican virtue simply ceded its place to rights, and liberty no longer was taken to mean living in a free state but just being free from coercion and interference.<sup>9</sup> The sudden emergence of *democracy* and *liberalism* apparently constituted a complete watershed, a clean break with both the institutions of the old regime and

its various forms of political discourse, the language of early modern classical republicanism among them.

The most obvious problem with this line of interpretation is the fact that late eighteenth-century European reformers and revolutionaries, while certainly shedding the pejorative connotations which had always been attached to the term *democracy*, never used the term *liberalism* and first and foremost regarded themselves as *republicans*. Indeed these were the very decades in which the term *republicanism* was invented and for the first time widely used in public discourse.<sup>10</sup> It might of course be argued that the revolutionary use of republican vocabulary was in fact a case of spurious persistence and that continuities in vocabulary masked fundamental changes in substance.<sup>11</sup> That, in other words, the *modern* republic which the revolutionaries envisaged was something fundamentally different from both the classical and the early modern republic. There is certainly something to be said for this point of view, for it is undeniably true that many late eighteenth-century republicans considered the thoroughly reformed or new republics they were trying to establish as historically unprecedented.<sup>12</sup> Yet it is equally undeniable that a great number of the conceptual problems they were wrestling with were rooted in the pre-existing republican tradition. Rather than constituting a clean break with the republican past, late eighteenth-century republicanism should therefore be understood as an extremely complex intellectual struggle to adapt classical and early modern republicanism to the circumstances of the modern age. That such a case can indeed be convincingly argued has particularly transpired in recent scholarship on France. In a rather dramatic shift of emphasis historians have started to argue that viewing French revolutionary republicanism as an attempted transformation of, rather than as a complete break with, classical and early modern republicanism allows us a much deeper and better understanding of French late eighteenth-century republican discourse than has hitherto been the case.<sup>13</sup> It also allows us to see the eventual emergence of liberalism more as a gradual development than as a sudden and dramatic rupture with the republican past. In the words of Andreas Kalyvas and Ira Katznelson, “Political liberalism burst from the shell of a republican chrysalis”.<sup>14</sup>

The present chapter is intended as a contribution to this ongoing debate about both the staying power and the gradual transformation of early modern classical republican discourse, which throughout the eighteenth century had provided powerful impulses for political opposition and reform, in the turbulent late-eighteenth-century world of political revolution. From this perspective it will take a closer look at the final phase of the long Dutch Revolution of the last two decades of the eighteenth century: the Batavian Revolution that started in 1795. This episode in Dutch history has long been recognised by historians as being of major

importance.<sup>15</sup> Yet their preoccupation with what they frequently have described as the sudden rise of modern democracy has generally prevented them from seeing that the true richness of this revolution must be sought in its attempt to transform the early modern classical republican tradition and to adapt it to the modern age. This chapter will show how the Dutch, during the final years of the eighteenth century, engaged in an active and creative dialogue with the heritage of early modern classical republican political thought and how their revolution took shape in and through that dialogue. After a brief look at the political developments during the years between the fall of the Dutch *ancien régime* in January of 1795 and the adoption of the first modern republican constitution in the spring of 1798, the chapter will focus on three areas of Dutch republican debate. It will, first of all, analyze the heated revolutionary discussions over the issue of federalism versus the unitary state. It will then proceed to investigate the tension in Dutch revolutionary discourse between republican participation and democratic representation. Thirdly and finally, it will attempt to demonstrate that most Dutch republican revolutionaries, even though they were perfectly aware of living in a polite and commercial nation, were unwilling or unable entirely to give up the ancient republican ideal of disinterested virtue in the construction of their modern republic.

## From the Old to the New Republic

When in January of 1795 French troops marched into the Republic of the Seven United Provinces and helped topple the Dutch *ancien régime*, the country had been torn by intense political and ideological unrest for well over a decade. During much of the second half of the eighteenth century Dutchmen had been worrying about what they perceived as the moral corruption of their once so glorious republic. It was not, however, until the outbreak of the fourth Anglo-Dutch war in 1780 that this rather diffuse criticism of the moral decline of the Dutch nation transformed itself into a political programme for republican renewal. The so-called Patriot movement of the 1780s started out in an almost purely classical republican vein, suspecting the stadholder of monarchical and even despotic ambitions and blaming him and his corrupt court for undermining both the mixed constitution and the republican *moeurs* of the nation. Yet very soon the Patriots moved beyond such traditional staples of republican opposition. Within just a few years, and liberally supplementing classical republican vocabulary with the Enlightenment language of inalienable individual rights, they came to the conclusion that the Dutch Republic in its present political form was beyond saving and that its institutions needed a thorough overhaul. The desire for constitutional restoration gave way to the ambition to create a fundamentally reformed or even a completely new republic. Indeed it was not uncommon for the more

radical Patriots to maintain that the Dutch had never been free in their entire history, since citizens had never been sovereign, inalienable rights had systematically been ignored, and there had never existed a proper written constitution.<sup>16</sup> The Dutch Patriots, however, did not get much of a chance to put their theories into practice. In September 1787 their movement was brutally suppressed by an Orangist counter-revolution, funded by Great Britain and supported by Prussian arms.

When seven years later thousands of exiled Patriots returned to their country in the wake of the French army, the situation had dramatically changed in favour of the reformers and revolutionaries. The old republic, thoroughly delegitimised by years of harsh repression, collapsed with a minimum of resistance. The stadholder fled to England and the Batavian Republic was proclaimed. The atmosphere during the first months after the fall of the old regime was one of exhilaration and optimism. The French slogan of *liberty, equality, and fraternity* was heard everywhere and within weeks declarations of the rights of man and of the citizen were adopted in most provinces.<sup>17</sup> The old regents were swiftly removed from their posts, but in doing so the Batavian revolutionaries took great care to operate with moderation and to refrain from political violence. They were highly aware not only of the bitter heritage of violence and exile of their own recent history but also of the appalling atrocities committed during the French terror. Caution and moderation would remain characteristic of the Batavian Revolution throughout most of its history, justifying the many later descriptions of it as a *velvet revolution*. While the first domestic revolutionary measures were implemented the Batavians also reached an agreement with their French liberators. In the Treaty of The Hague of May 16 1795 the French – in return for, among other things, a substantial sum of money – promised to respect the sovereignty and independence of the new Dutch state.<sup>18</sup> It seemed as if everything was now in place for the rapid establishment of a new form of republican government based on the written constitution so fervently desired by the Dutch revolutionaries.

Yet the initial appearance of political unity turned out to be quite deceptive, and it soon became clear that there existed very little agreement among the revolutionaries about the nature of republican government. Indeed it took the Batavians more than a year even to bring together their first National Assembly, which first met in The Hague – in the old ballroom of the stadholder – on 1 March 1796.<sup>19</sup> At that occasion Pieter Paulus, the first chairman of the Assembly, still held high hopes for the near future and reminded the newly elected representatives that the Americans and the French had already erected a *grand edifice of liberty* and that, if only they remained united and avoided party strife, the Batavians would soon be able to take their place beside these nations.<sup>20</sup> In reality things turned out to be much more complicated than Paulus had hoped. Rather than bringing about unity, the National Assembly served

to make the deep political divisions among Dutch republicans more visible than ever. It might be said that, for the first time in Dutch history, it created a central platform for political debate. Its activities were reported upon in great detail in the regularly published *Dagverhaal*, its meetings were open to the public, and its deliberations were the subject of running commentary in such periodicals as *De Republikein* and *De Democraten*. Closely scrutinised by public opinion, the generally highly educated elected representatives conducted, be it in the various constitutional committees or in the plenary sessions of the parliament, a debate about the nature of republican government that was quite astonishing in its depth and intensity.<sup>21</sup> Although they made swift progress on certain topics – the separation of church and state is a prime example – the new parliamentarians failed to reach even the beginning of a consensus on the main issues so that finally the most divisive matters had to be resolved by a *coup d'état* in January of 1798.<sup>22</sup> Many contemporary commentators were convinced that the root cause of the ceaseless Batavian political conflicts was to be sought in the fact that, as *De Republikein* already observed in 1795, the words *republic* and *republican* were more often used than properly understood and that as a consequence conceptual confusion reigned supreme.<sup>23</sup> In retrospect we can see how this conceptual uncertainty and contestation arose from the fact that the Batavian revolutionaries were engaged in an extremely complicated effort to reconcile such traditional republican notions as the distrust of centralised political power, the necessity of citizen participation, and the crucial role of political virtue with newer notions of unity and indivisibility, democratic representation, and inalienable natural rights. It is to their complex struggles to somehow reconcile the old and the new that the following three paragraphs are devoted.

## The Unitary Versus the Federal Republic

The first area in which there evidently was interaction and tension between old and new modes of republican thought was that of the prospective shape of the new Dutch state. In the highly decentralised Dutch Republic, it had always been considered more or less self-evident that the existence of a large measure of provincial and even urban political power was a necessary precondition for the survival of political liberty. Indeed early modern Dutch republicans generally held that liberty could only flourish in small-scale political environments and had therefore always been deeply suspicious of the Orange stadholders, who were suspected of harbouring a desire to amass centralised power in their own hands and establish a monarchy. After 1795, of course, the situation had, for various reasons, completely changed. The stadholders had been driven from the country, the failed Patriot movement of the 1780s had convinced many Batavians that restructuring the political order could not successfully be

done on a local or even provincial scale, the newly declared sovereignty of the people was thought to constitute a safeguard against the establishment of tyranny, and the French Revolution was providing a powerful model of unity and indivisibility. In these circumstances one would expect the republican heritage of distrust of centralised political power and emphasis on smallness of scale to have vanished. Yet this turned out not to be the case, and a large group of revolutionaries remained unconvinced of the compatibility of unity and republican liberty.<sup>24</sup>

Revolutionaries in favour of establishing a unitary state certainly did not lack in powerful arguments to support their case. They attempted to associate federalism with the worst aspects of the *ancien régime* and frequently presented it as little more than the handmaiden of pre-revolutionary aristocratic domination and as something to be avoided at all cost in the future. Pieter Vreede, one of the most radical republicans of the entire Batavian period, pointed out in 1796 that separate provinces were no more than *hungry Egotists* and that those in favour of the introduction of a federalist constitution for the Batavian Republic implicitly also desired *a Tyrant, a Stadholder* and were therefore guilty of a “criminal love of slavery, and hatred of liberty”.<sup>25</sup> Yet many of those who favoured the introduction of a unitary republic realised that it was a much better political strategy to allay the fear of their opponents that the introduction of a sizeable unitary state would lead to the creation of an all-powerful central assembly, which would decide on literally everything and would as a result utterly destroy republican liberty. Rutger Jan Schimmelpenninck, for instance, showed himself extremely conscious of such traditional republican fears in his pleas for the introduction of a unitary republic. Instead of following the innovative American view that a large republic was actually better than a small one, he went out of his way to emphasise that great theorists such as Montesquieu and Rousseau had been perfectly right in arguing that a free republican constitution could not exist or survive in a unitary and extended state with a large population. That argument, he however continued, was irrelevant to the Dutch case, since even after the introduction of political unity, the Batavian Republic would still be minute in size and have a relatively small population.<sup>26</sup>

Such attempts to accommodate traditional republican views, however, utterly failed to convince those who remained in favour of federalism. They pointed out that the proponents of the unitary state were deeply misguided in equating federalism in general with federalism as it had existed in the old Dutch Republic and that federalism and revolutionary republicanism could very well go together. They also stubbornly clung to their deep distrust of undivided and concentrated political power. Johannes Luyken, for one, was convinced that the introduction of a completely unitary state would eventually result in the introduction of *Eastern Despotism*.<sup>27</sup> Among the most principled opponents of the unitary

state was Joan Hendrik Swildens, who in a series of publications kept explaining that “provincial sovereignties and therefore a federal constitution are absolutely necessary for the continued existence and prosperity of our republic”.<sup>28</sup> To prove this fundamental point he adduced an almost endless number of arguments, ranging from the need of a commercial country for small administrative units to the salutary influence of a federalist structure on the prevention of wars of aggression.<sup>29</sup> His most fundamental point, however, concerned the nature of republican government. The defining essence of a republic, Swildens maintained, was that it was a form of government in which citizens governed themselves, if necessary through representatives closely bound to their wishes. The introduction of a sizeable unitary state with elected representatives far removed from the citizen and largely free to act as they pleased would therefore spell the death of republican liberty.<sup>30</sup> In such a state the expression *I govern myself* would inevitably lose all meaning.<sup>31</sup> Where Swildens’ federalist political thought obviously remained strongly rooted in pre-revolutionary republicanism, other federalists – Gerard Dumbar prominently among them – also looked across the Atlantic for an alternative to French unity and indivisibility. For Dumbar, who would keep fighting unity until his death in 1802, it was obvious that unitary states, regardless of their size, were essentially incompatible with “the true goals of Republican Government”, the preservation of popular liberty being the first of these.<sup>32</sup> This was the reason why America was still a stable and free republic, whereas Europe since the introduction of French-sponsored unity had seen nothing but instability and was therefore now facing the threat of Bonapartist dictatorship, he wrote in 1801.<sup>33</sup> Both proponents and opponents of the unitary state, it is clear, freely mixed old and new republican thought but did this in such different ways that no solution or compromise could be reached. It is therefore less than surprising that, in the end, the unitary Batavian Republic had to be introduced by the forceful political elimination of the federalist camp.

## Representative Democracy and Republican Participation

Unable as they were to reach agreement on the shape of their future republican state the Batavian republicans also ceaselessly argued about the most desirable republican form of government. This second great debate had already got off to a flying conceptual start in the Patriot era. During the 1780s many Patriots had abandoned the old notion of mixed government that had for so long served as a legitimization of the Dutch political system. In its stead they embraced the Enlightenment concept of inalienable popular sovereignty. Even the most radical Patriots, however, conceded that although the people remained sovereign, it had to be governed (or govern itself) through the mechanism of representation. What the Patriots therefore ended up doing was to redefine a legitimate republic

as a *democracy by representation*.<sup>34</sup> It was not, however, until after the fall of the old regime in 1795 that many of the republican revolutionaries began to think deeply about the implications of the concept of democratic representation that had so enthusiastically been adopted during the Patriot era. Indeed, from the moment discussions about the election of a single National Assembly started, representation took political centre stage. The ensuing discussion was extremely complex. The struggle, it would seem, was between those republicans who, under the new system of democratic representation, wished to save as much as possible of the classical republican ideal of the permanent participation of the citizen in politics and therefore adopted a *mandate* or *actual* theory of representation and those who increasingly thought that republican liberty could be guaranteed sufficiently through a system of virtual representation and individual rights.<sup>35</sup>

Many of the most fundamental debates on the issue of representation were conducted in the National Assembly. Until the adoption of the first constitution in 1798, this body had a double status as simultaneously a *constituante* and a regular legislative assembly. In both of these capacities it could be said to *represent* the people. However, what did this exactly mean? To some radical republican members of the National Assembly it was quite clear that they had or should have very little independence from the electorate. Coert Lambertus van Beyma, for instance, repeatedly explained that although representation, unknown to the glorious ancients, had become a necessity in the large states of the modern world, it was nonetheless undeniably "a diminution of original liberty". It was therefore absolutely necessary that the citizens exercised the greatest possible influence over those they had elected to represent them. Representatives were to be viewed as the administrators of the people, not as its curators or wardens.<sup>36</sup> Jacob Hahn completely agreed with this evaluation of the proper role of representatives and even went so far as to propose the abolition of the word itself.<sup>37</sup> On the other side of the spectrum of opinion there were those who embraced a theory of representation reminiscent of the work of Sieyes: They maintained that although the people should of course elect its representatives these should thereafter largely be allowed to operate in independence.<sup>38</sup> This was the difference between a direct democracy and the modern notion of representative democracy. As Jacob van Manen put it in February of 1797, "In a Representative Democracy the Legislative Power is what the People is in a direct Democracy".<sup>39</sup> These opposed views of the meaning of the concept of representation reflected an underlying difference of opinion regarding the nature of republican government. Those stressing the need for a permanent role of the people in politics regarded political participation as a goal in itself, were convinced that true republican liberty consisted in self-government of the people, and therefore insisted that this ideal should be approached as much as possible under the system of representation

which they admitted had become a necessity in modern times. The adherents of the virtual or independence theory of representation, on the other hand, tended not to regard self-government as a moral and political goal in itself but as a means better to protect the civil liberty of the citizen. Many representatives in parliament hovered somewhere between these two alternative visions of republican government.

Unsurprisingly the sharpest confrontations between the different conceptions of representation and republican government took place at those moments when key decisions on the future constitutional order had to be made. In the summer of 1797, for instance, during the political struggles over a first – and as it would turn out, unsuccessful – constitutional proposal, the most radical (and classically oriented) republicans powerfully voiced their fears that the proposed constitution would cut the heart out of true republicanism by disastrously curtailing the active involvement of the citizen in politics and thus ensure that “the Batavians will not become *Greeks* or *Romans*, whose disinterested virtue and self-sacrifice for the common good of the Fatherland after so many centuries still shine brightly in our eyes”.<sup>40</sup> Some six months later, with discussions over a second constitutional proposal firmly deadlocked and speculation about a *coup d'état* already rife, such classically inspired radical republican arguments surfaced once again when forty-three parliamentarians insisted on the utter necessity of maintaining the closest possible ties between citizens and their representatives. Shortly thereafter, in January of 1798 the radical republicans seized power and quickly and successfully submitted a new constitutional proposal to the popular vote.<sup>41</sup> The first Dutch constitution was a fact. Given its long and complicated pre-history it inevitably was a somewhat hybrid document. In giving a much larger role to the primary assemblies of the citizens than the previous constitutional proposals had done, in defining the electorate very broadly, in curtailing the power of the executive, and in establishing a clear procedure for constitutional revision by the people, however, it nonetheless represented a major victory for the radical and classically inspired vision of republican liberty.<sup>42</sup> To ascribe this to the influence of Rousseau, as has been done in the past, is less than convincing, as this is far too simple. Most radical Dutch republicans did not accept Rousseau’s rejection of the principle of representation.<sup>43</sup> The explanation lies elsewhere. It must be sought in the creative ways in which many Dutch republicans tried to combine ancient and modern liberty.<sup>44</sup>

## Creating Virtuous Republicans

The debates on federalism versus unity and on the interpretation of the concept of representation both powerfully suggest that the early years of the Batavian Revolution did not witness the sudden birth of modern liberal democracy. Instead, they demonstrate the extent to which the

Batavian revolutionaries were still indebted to older republican traditions and concepts. That this was indeed the case becomes even clearer when we turn our attention from these institutional themes to the fundamental contemporary debates on the preconditions for the existence of a free republic. It is in these debates that the Batavians' continued indebtedness to classical and early modern concepts of republican virtue is perhaps most fully revealed. Indeed, the single most important question the Batavian revolutionaries wrestled with during the early years of their revolution was how to create and maintain the virtue they deemed indispensable for the survival of their experiment in republican democracy. The Batavian revolutionaries shared the widespread eighteenth-century conviction that, as Bernardus Bosch had put it in 1792, "liberty and virtue are most intimately related: they provide each other with strength and the fall of the one will invariably bring about the fall of the other".<sup>45</sup> The problem was that they had also convinced themselves that republican virtue had almost completely disappeared from their country and that the present moral standards of their nation were extremely wanting. How to restore the political virtue that was held to be indispensable for the survival of republican liberty therefore became one of the most pressing questions. In their desperate search for virtue the Batavian revolutionaries demonstrated a willingness to question even the most hallowed tenets of traditional Dutch republican thought. Thus, in the writings of such leading Batavians as Samuel Wiselius and Willem Ockerse, strong doubts were voiced over the compatibility of commerce and republican liberty.<sup>46</sup> Yet although the Batavian revolutionaries made an effort to redress the economic balance between commerce and agriculture they realised that very little could be done against the predominantly commercial nature of Dutch society.<sup>47</sup> They therefore concentrated on finding ways in which the self-interest inevitably generated by commerce could be tamed and republican virtue could be revived within modern commercial society.

The first of these ways, of course, was the introduction of political liberty itself. The Batavians were convinced that the introduction of true political liberty was one of the main roads to the restoration of national virtue. Yet soon after 1795 it became painfully apparent that the various available scenarios for the political restoration of virtue failed to deliver the desired results. Instead of harmoniously cooperating in a virtuous manner the new members of parliament disagreed on almost all major points and in the eyes of many threatened the very survival of the new republic with their factious behaviour.<sup>48</sup> The Batavian citizens did not seem to be doing much better. In 1797 *De Republikein* unfavourably compared their virtue with that of the ancient Romans and deeply deplored the continued unwillingness of the Batavians to sacrifice their self-interest for the common good, even now that they were free.<sup>49</sup> To many it became increasingly clear that political liberty in and by itself would not lead to the restoration of virtue and therefore needed to be supplemented with a

massive programme of civic education. This programme drew its inspiration from a variety of sources. It was deeply indebted to the example of the ancient Greek and Roman republics, it looked with admiration at the cultural initiatives of the new French republic, and it shared the general Enlightenment confidence in the ability of education to improve humankind.<sup>50</sup> It was intended to instil in all Dutch citizens the conviction that the maintenance of republican liberty was the highest societal goal, since “without such a general conviction, without the passion and zeal it inspires in the people, every republican Constitution, no matter how perfect, will in time fall prey to vices that can never be eradicated by the laws alone”.<sup>51</sup>

There were a great many ways to inculcate this fundamental truth in the citizenry. It could, first of all, be done through civic festivals which, as IJsbrand van Hamelsveld had already written in 1791, the ancients had regarded as indispensable “in all countries with a Republican form of government”.<sup>52</sup> The Batavian revolutionaries agreed and in their 1798 constitution determined that “there will be National Festivals to commemorate the Batavian Revolution and other noteworthy events on a yearly basis, and also to increase fraternity among the citizens and to bind them to the Constitution, the Laws, the Fatherland and Liberty”.<sup>53</sup> It was obvious to most Batavian republicans, however, that the sensory introduction to the blessings of republican virtue provided by civic festivals was far from sufficient. To create a veritable sense of virtuous independence in all citizens, they also deemed it necessary to resort to another old republican nostrum: citizen armament. Closely following their Patriot predecessors of the 1780s the Batavian revolutionaries insisted that citizen armament was not only of crucial importance in protecting the nation against internal oppressors but also as a tool to form the character of republican citizens. In an issue devoted to “the creation of Republicans and the subsequent maintenance of their noble character”, *De Republikein* observed that citizen armament constituted “the main bond between the Free Citizen, the State, and liberty”.<sup>54</sup> The editors of *De Democraten* fully agreed and insisted that citizen armament was perhaps the best way to make citizens aware of their republican dignity: “Look at your Compatriots, consult your own feelings, Batavians! and ask when it was that you have most deeply felt your Republican worth? We know that everything will tell you that it was when you were bearing arms”.<sup>55</sup> For most Batavian republicans, in short, it was entirely clear that citizen armament was “a first necessity in a Republic”.<sup>56</sup>

Yet in the end neither festivals nor arms could compete in importance with education in the Batavian quest to create lasting republican virtue. Already well before their revolution the example of the ancient republics and the educational philosophy of the Enlightenment had convinced many Dutchmen that virtue was something that could be learned and taught and that this might be the key to the regeneration of the manners

and morals of the nation.<sup>57</sup> Before the Batavian Revolution, however, few educational reforms were implemented. To the revolutionaries of 1795 this was hardly surprising since, as Abraham Vereul explained in that same year, educational reform had evidently been impossible in *a land of Slavery*, where virtue was ridiculed, money was considered the true measure of greatness, and knowledge was deemed politically dangerous. Now that political slavery had finally come to an end, however, a splendid structure of liberty could be erected on a firm foundation of “virtue, morals and true enlightenment”.<sup>58</sup> Vereul’s theme of the intimate bond between education, virtue, and republican liberty was echoed in countless publications during the early years of the Batavian Revolution and his message was adopted by the National Assembly, where educational reform was regarded as one of the highest priorities. Whereas Batavian republicans, as we have seen, disagreed on many other major issues, there seems to have existed a broad consensus on the necessity to create a virtuous citizenry through education. It was Joannes van Hooff who summed up the general sentiment of the members of parliament when he observed that it was “safe to say that public education is the guarantee of Liberty” and that it was absolutely necessary to create a predilection “for true Liberty and Patriotism” in even the youngest children.<sup>59</sup> No wonder then that Georges Cuvier and François Noël, when in 1810 they arrived to inspect the schools of the Dutch state that had recently been annexed to France, found in existence “the most effective and comprehensive system of elementary education in Europe”.<sup>60</sup>

## Conclusion

The Batavian Revolution took place in a country that had been a republic for centuries and where the educated elites were highly aware of both ancient and modern theories about the nature of republican government. It followed decades of debate about the moral and political decline of the nation and had been preceded by – and was in many ways the continuation of – a powerful domestic reform movement, which had fundamentally redefined the meaning of the term republic: No longer referring to a mixed form of government, it had come to stand for representative democracy. The Batavian Revolution moreover started well after both the American and the French Revolutions, and the Batavian revolutionaries were intimately familiar with these momentous events. It is impossible to doubt that the Batavian revolutionaries introduced a great many unprecedented political reforms. Not only did they create a representative democracy but they also formulated declarations of the rights of man and of the citizen, separated church and state, replaced federalism with unity and, in 1798, adopted the first written constitution in the history of the country. Yet in so doing, it has been the main argument of this chapter, they remained highly aware of the early modern classical republican

tradition and tried to incorporate essential aspects of it into their new republic, thus creating a synthesis between the old and the new.

That this was indeed the case has been demonstrated superfluous in this chapter through the analysis of three crucial topics in Batavian political debate. In the struggle between those who wished to introduce unity and indivisibility and those who wished to retain a federal political structure, neither side adopted the modern theory expounded in the *Federalist Papers* that an extended republic was an improvement over a small republic. Instead, with very few exceptions, both sides in the debate held on to the traditional republican view that smallness of scale was an essential precondition for successful republican government. A similar unwillingness to altogether abandon traditional republican wisdom in the midst of revolutionary renewal was evident in a second major Batavian political debate, that over the nature of political representation. Although it is undeniably true that some Batavian republicans adopted an independence theory of representation, a great many others refused to accept that representation equaled the end of participatory politics. They clung to the old republican notion that liberty consisted of self-government, that representation was no more than a necessary evil, and that representatives should at all times remain closely bound to the body of the citizens. It was this republican vision of politics that found distinct echoes in the constitution of 1798. The third and perhaps most prolonged Batavian political debate discussed in this chapter concerned the preconditions for republican government. Here too it is abundantly clear that the Batavian revolutionaries still derived much of their inspiration from traditional republican argument. Their campaign of civic education through political festivals, citizen armament, and schooling was entirely based on the conviction that the only way even a modern commercial republic could survive was through the virtue and patriotism of all of its citizens. Taken together these three crucial debates demonstrate not only how difficult it was for the Batavians to come to a new consensus about the nature of government, but also why this was the case. They were engaged in a highly complex intellectual and political struggle to combine ancient and modern liberty in new and creative ways. It was not a liberal democracy they were trying to establish but a republican democracy in which, in the words of Franco Venturi, “the heritage of the past was blended with the riches of the present”.<sup>61</sup>

## Notes

1. F. Venturi, *Utopia and Reform in the Enlightenment* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971).
2. R.R. Palmer, *The Age of the Democratic Revolution: A Political History of Europe and America*, 2 vols. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1959–1964); P. Gay, *The Enlightenment. An Interpretation*, 2 vols. (New York, NY: Alfred A. Knopf, 1966–1969).

3. Venturi, *Utopia and Reform*, 71.
4. Ibid., 6.
5. Ibid., 90, 94. For general discussions of Venturi's work see J. Robertson, "Franco Venturi's Enlightenment", *Past & Present* 137 (1992): 183–206; and G. Ricuperati, "The Historiographical Legacy of Franco Venturi (1914–1994)", *Journal of Modern Italian Studies* 2 (1997): 67–88. Venturi's views on the republican tradition are discussed in M. Albertone, ed., *Il repubblicanesimo moderno: L'idea di repubblica nella riflessione storica di Franco Venturi* (Napels: Bibliopolis, 2006).
6. The key works are, of course, J.G.A. Pocock, *The Machiavellian Moment: Florentine Political Thought and the Atlantic Republican Tradition* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1975); Q. Skinner, *The Foundations of Modern Political Thought*, 2 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978); Q. Skinner, *Liberty Before Liberalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).
7. Pocock, *Machiavellian Moment*, 462.
8. Skinner, *Liberty Before Liberalism*, 96.
9. J.G.A. Pocock, "Virtues, Rights, and Manners: A Model for Historians of Political Thought", in *Virtue, Commerce, and History: Essays on Political Thought and History, Chiefly in the Eighteenth Century*, ed. J.G.A. Pocock (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 37–50; Skinner, *Liberty Before Liberalism*, 96–99.
10. On the conceptual history of *republic* and *republicanism* see W. Mager, "Republik", in *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe: Historisches Lexikon zur politisch-sozialen Sprache in Deutschland*, ed. O. Brunner, W. Conze, and R. Koselleck (Stuttgart: Klett, 1972–1997), 5:549–651.
11. The term *spurious persistence* was coined by Peter Gay in his polemic with Carl Becker. See P. Gay, "Carl Becker's Heavenly City", in *The Party of Humanity: Essays in the French Enlightenment*, ed. P. Gay (New York, NY: Norton, 1971), 188–210.
12. L. Hunt, ed., *Politics, Culture, and Class in the French Revolution* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1984), 19–51; B. Fontana, *The Invention of the Modern Republic* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994).
13. K.M. Baker, "Transformations of Classical Republicanism in Eighteenth-Century France", *Journal of Modern History* 73 (2001): 32–53; R. Monnier, *Républicanisme, Patriotisme et Révolution française* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2006); A. Jainchill, *Reimagining Politics After the Terror: The Republican Origins of French Liberalism* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2008); A. de Dijn, *French Political Thought from Montesquieu to Tocqueville: Liberty in a Levelled Society?* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008); R. Hammersley, "Concepts of Citizenship in France During the Long Eighteenth Century", *European Review of History: Revue européenne d'histoire* 22 (2015): 468–485. The most wide-ranging formulation of this new interpretation of the fortunes of classical republicanism at the end of the eighteenth century may be found in A. Kalyvas and I. Katzenelson, *Liberal Beginnings: Making a Republic for the Moderns* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).
14. Kalyvas and Katzenelson, *Liberal Beginnings*, 5.
15. See for instance R.R. Palmer, "Much in Little: The Dutch Revolution of 1795", *Journal of Modern History* 26 (1954): 15–35. The best discussion of the Dutch Revolution in English remains S. Schama, *Patriots and Liberators: Revolution in the Netherlands 1780–1813* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1977).
16. For more detailed discussions of Patriot political thought see S.R.E. Klein, *Patriots Republikeinse: Politieke cultuur in Nederland (1766–1787)*

- (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 1995); N.C.F. van Sas, *De metamorfose van Nederland: Van oude orde naar moderniteit, 1750–1900* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2004), 173–274; W.R.E. Velema, *Republicans: Essays on Eighteenth-Century Dutch Political Thought* (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 115–177.
17. W.J. Goslinga, *De rechten van den mensch en burger: Een overzicht der Nederlandsche geschriften en verklaringen* (The Hague: A.J. Oranje, 1936), 86–107; F.H. van der Burg and H. Boels, *Tweehonderd jaar rechten van de mens in Nederland: De verklaring van de rechten van de mens en burger van 31 januari 1795 toegelicht en vergeleken met Franse en Amerikaanse voorgangers* (Leiden: F.M. van Asbeck Centrum voor Mensenrechtenstudies, 1994).
  18. Schama, *Patriots and Liberators*, 192–210; R. Kubben, *Regeneration and Hegemony: Franco-Batavian Relations in the Revolutionary Era, 1795–1803* (Leiden: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 2011), 141–463.
  19. The complex story of the making of the first National Assembly is told in J. Oddens, *Pioniers in schaduwbeeld: Het eerste parlement van Nederland 1796–1798* (Nijmegen: Vantilt, 2012), 73–100.
  20. *Dagverhaal der handelingen van de nationale vergadering reprenteerende het volk van Nederland* (The Hague: Swart en Comp., 1796–1798), 1:5–8.
  21. On the background of the members of the first and the second National Assembly in general see Oddens, *Pioniers in schaduwbeeld*, 101–145; for detailed information on individual representatives see A.M. Elias and P.C.M. Schölvinck, *Volksrepresentanten en wetgevers: De politieke elite in de Bataafs-Franse tijd 1796–1810* (Amsterdam: Van Soeren & Co., 1991).
  22. The most recent discussions of the *coup d'état* of January 1798 are N. van Sas, *Bataafse terreur: De betekenis van 1798* (Nijmegen: Vantilt, 2011); and Oddens, *Pioniers in schaduwbeeld*, 302–317.
  23. “Onderzoek, wat eene Republiek zij?” See *De Republikein* (Amsterdam, 1795–1797), I: no.2, 13.
  24. The most recent treatment of the political and intellectual struggle between Dutch unitarism and federalism in the years between 1795 and 1798 may be found in M. Rutjes, *Door gelijkheid gegrepen: Democratie, burgerschap en staat in Nederland 1795–1801* (Nijmegen: Vantilt, 2012), 29–67.
  25. *Dagverhaal*, 3:734–735.
  26. Ibid., 4:45.
  27. Ibid., 3:717.
  28. J.H. Swildens, *Zes-daagsche staats-brief over ‘s lands hoogste zaak aan den burger Vitringa...* (Amsterdam: Joannes Roelof Poster, 1796), 4.
  29. Ibid., 6–49.
  30. Ibid., 14–16 and 28–30.
  31. Ibid., 15.
  32. Gerhard Dumbar, *Betoog, dat eene onverdeelde regeeringsvorm, in een gemeene-best, uit haren eigen aart, onbestendig en voor de vrijheid van den staat gevaarlijk zijn moet* (Amsterdam: Ten Brink, 1801), 58.
  33. Ibid., 8.
  34. Klein, Patriots Republikanisme, passim; J. Dunn, *Setting the People Free: The Story of Democracy* (London: Atlantic Books, 2006), 84–87; Velema, *Republicans*, 139–157. For the actual use of the term *Democratie* by Representatie see e.g. *Ontwerp om de Republiek door eene heilzaame vereeniging der belangen van regent en burger, van binnen gelukkig, en van buiten gedugt te maken* (Leiden: L. Herdingh, 1785.), 46.

35. For general discussions of political theories of representation see H.F. Pitkin, *The Concept of Representation*, 10th ed. (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2013); B. Manin, *The Principles of Representative Government* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997); N. Urbinati, *Representative Democracy: Principles and Genealogy* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2010); I. Shapiro, et al., *Political Representation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009). For recent discussions of the concept of representation in the Batavian republic see Rutjes, *Door gelijkheid gegrepen*, 69–120; and Oddens, *Pioniers in schaduwbeeld*, passim.
36. *Dagverhaal*, 4:76, 8:277.
37. *Ibid.*, 4:651.
38. For Sieyes' concept of representation see K.M. Baker, "Representation Redefined", in *Inventing the French Revolution: Essays on French Political Culture in the Eighteenth Century*, ed. K.M. Baker (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 224–251; and W.H. Sewell, Jr., *A Rhetoric of Bourgeois Revolution: The Abbé Sieyes and What Is the Third Estate* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1994). There is no thorough study of Sieyes' impact in the Netherlands, but see Rutjes, *Door gelijkheid gegrepen*, 80; and Oddens, *Pioniers in schaduwbeeld*, passim.
39. *Dagverhaal*, 4:932.
40. *Ibid.*, 9–10.
41. For the story of the hectic first half of the year 1798 see Oddens, *Pioniers in schaduwbeeld*, 319–362.
42. The text of the constitution of 1798 may be found in J. Rosendaal, ed., *Staatsregeling voor het Bataafse volk 1798: De eerste grondwet van Nederland* (Nijmegen: Vantilt, 2005).
43. K.F. Bauer, *Der französische Einfluss auf die Batavische und die Helvetische Verfassung des Jahres 1798: Ein Beitrag zur französischen Verfassungsgeschichte* (s.l.:s.n., 1962), 38.
44. For a more extended discussion of the tension between participation and representation see W.R.E. Velema, "Dead and Buried After the Elections? Voting, Representation, and Citizenship in the Batavian Revolution", in *Cultures of Voting in Pre-Modern Europe*, ed. S. Ferente, L. Kunčević, and M. Pattenden (London: Routledge, 2018), 141–156.
45. Bernardus Bosch, *De leerzame praat-al* (Amsterdam: Bij W. Wijnands en H. Brongers junior, 1791–1793), 3:30, 233.
46. S.I. Wiselius, *De staatkundige verlichting der Nederlanderen, in een wijsgeerig-historisch tafereel geschetst*, 2nd ed. (Brussel: Brest van Kempen, 1828), 337; W.A. Ockerse, *Ontwerp tot eene algemeene characterkunde* (Utrecht: G.T. van Paddenburg en zoon, 1788–1797), 3:136–140.
47. On the rehabilitation of agriculture during the Batavian Revolution see Rutjes, *Door gelijkheid gegrepen*, 139–145.
48. While most Batavian revolutionaries, following the mainstream of classical and early modern republican thought, regarded political parties and factions as almost indistinguishable and intrinsically evil phenomena, it is nonetheless clear in hindsight that the Batavian Revolution saw the formation of rudimentary political parties. For a thorough discussion of this topic see Oddens, *Pioniers in schaduwbeeld*, 195–236.
49. *De Republikein*, III: no. 157, 369–371.
50. The most comprehensive treatment of Batavian civic education so far is A. Jourdan, *La Révolution Batave entre la France et l'Amérique (1795–1806)* (Rennes: Presses universitaires de Rennes, 2014), 267–434.
51. *De Republikein*, I: no. 8, 67.

52. I. van Hamelsveld, *De zedelijke toestand der Nederlandsche natie op het einde der achttiende eeuw* (Amsterdam: J. Allart, 1791), 336–337.
53. Rosendaal, *Staatsregeling voor het Bataafse volk* 1798, 69 (“Burgerlijke en staatkundige grondregels”, article LXIV). A pioneering work on civic festivals is F. Grijzenhout, *Feesten voor het Vaderland: Patriotse en Bataafse feesten 1780–1806* (Zwolle: Waanders, 1989).
54. *De Republikein*, I: no. 8, 73.
55. *De Democraten*, no. 71, 238.
56. J. Greeven, *Beredeneert constitutioneel woordenboek*. . . (Dordrecht: A. Blussé, 1800), 21. Batavian thought on the armed citizen is a somewhat under-explored topic, but see F. Vletter, “De Bataafse Burgermacht als bolwerk der vrijheid: De politieke en militaire betekenis van een burgerschapsideaal”, *Tijdschrift voor Geschiedenis* 122 (2009): 492–507. For the relevant constitutional articles see Rosendaal, *Staatsregeling*, 66–67.
57. On eighteenth-century Dutch educational thought see e.g. J. Kloek and W. Mijnhardt, 1800: *Blauwdrukken voor een samenleving* (The Hague: Sdu Uitgevers, 2001), 267–290; and W. Los, *Opvoeding tot mens en burger: Pedagogiek als Cultuurkritiek in Nederland in de 18e eeuw* (Hilversum: Uitgeverij Verloren, 2005).
58. *Dagbladen van het verhandelde ter vergadering van de provisionele repreasentanten van het volk van Holland*. . . (The Hague: I. Van Cleef, 1795–1796), 1:7.
59. *Dagverhaal*, 5:962.
60. S. Schama, “Schools and Politics in the Netherlands, 1796–1814”, *The Historical Journal* 13 (1970): 589; M. van der Burg, *Nederland onder Franse invloed: Culturele overdracht en staatsvorming in de Napoleontische tijd, 1799–1813* (Amsterdam: De Bataafse Leeuw, 2009), 138–166.
61. Venturi, *Utopia and Reform*, 94.

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# 17 Words and Things

## Languages of Reform in Wilhelm Traugott Krug and Karl Ludwig von Haller<sup>1</sup>

*Béla Kapossy*

Quand le langage sera changé, les choses changeront.<sup>2</sup>

### 1. Reform and Revolution

When Venturi, whose work provided the backbone to this present volume, published his *Utopia and Reform in the Enlightenment* in 1971, he felt he could argue that Enlightenment studies were still predominantly concerned with theological and philosophical questions. Cassirer, Venturi claimed, “talks a lot about eighteenth-century religion. But about government, not as juridical theories, but as politics, he says little or nothing”.<sup>3</sup> This mostly Germano-centric view of the Enlightenment, where system-building and the construction of elaborate epistemological theories took precedence over more historically focussed and politically determined attempts to study how individual authors interacted with existing social institutions, and how they fought for their ideals even in situations of adversity, seemed to have been upheld by scholars even of his own generation. Venturi made it clear that this was not what he believed the real Enlightenment to have been, or what it could teach us. “What a pity it is that this method [i.e. reading the Enlightenment from the perspective of the history of philosophy] runs counter to what was the fundamental character of Enlightenment thought, that is the firm determination not to build philosophic systems, that is the complete distrust of their validity.”<sup>4</sup> Enlightenment, as he understood it, could not be captured through such abstract concepts as rationalism, naturalism, or sensualism. There was no such thing as a single *Enlightenment project*, at least not in the sense suggested by an old-style Germanic *Ideengeschichte*. Nor, especially, could it be understood through a retrospective Marxist reading of social and economic developments that announced the advent of the modern bourgeois republic. Such histories, like that of the French philosopher and sociologist Lucien Goldmann, Venturi claimed, said more about Marx’s view of the Enlightenment than about the Enlightenment itself. What interested him instead was a resolutely comparative intellectual history, often very personal and local, of the myriad of thinkers, men of letters,

magistrates, publicists, adventurers, ministers, and others grappling in their own way with and pushing for social, economic, moral, and above all political reforms. Venturi's vision of Enlightenment Europe was one that was decidedly not oriented towards, let alone determined by, the outcome of the French Revolution. There is a refreshing absence of any overt teleology here in that he tried to present the actors of the Enlightenment, great and more often small, on their own terms and within their own specific context rather than from a perspective measuring how much their respective ideas and actions might have voluntarily or involuntarily added to the demise of the Old Regime and the rise of modern liberalism and socialism. Consequently, the *Settecento riformatore* was not an obvious tunnel history of the Enlightenment, one where the ultimate historical outcome set the main problem that needed explaining. Venturi saw the actors he studied as primarily political animals, and what fascinated him was less whether these eighteenth-century reformers actually succeeded in their undertakings and more their dogged commitment to thinking of ways in which these reforms could be seen to theoretically and practically make sense.

Compared to other historians of his generation Venturi hence remained rather modest when it came to structuring these manifold reforms of the Enlightenment. Instead of providing an apologetic history of modern liberty, he proposed an evocative cartography of the itineraries the various moments of reform passed through: from the east to the north, to the centre and the west, then back to the east and finally back to the west, ending this zig-zag through the European ancien régime with a chapter entitled "Towards the Revolution in France".<sup>5</sup> Despite this hint towards things to come, the Enlightenment to him remained the period of reform, or rather reforms, and not the *pre-revolutionary period*. In this sense the emphasis on *reform* as the defining feature of the Enlightenment was obviously programmatic. The Enlightenment, as he put it in his Trevelyan Lectures, might be seen to occupy a "difficult yet fruitful equilibrium between utopia and reform". Utopia, however, was no inherent aspect of reform but only one part of the spectrum of possible intellectual positions that actors might or might not adopt.<sup>6</sup> Hence there was no *Dialectic of the Enlightenment* nor was there any discernible underlying dynamic resembling what Reinhart Koselleck had sketched out in his *Critique and Crisis*.<sup>7</sup> The French Revolution was not the outcome of a social critique that was subsequently directed at the post-Hobbesian politics of the eighteenth-century state. Crises arose when reforms broke down or when those in power failed to implement them in time.<sup>8</sup> This meant that crises, at least in principle, could also be overcome by means of reform.<sup>9</sup>

Venturi's focus on the moderate Enlightenment, where the idea of crisis was wedded to reform rather than revolution, left a considerable mark on Enlightenment scholarship and allowed for a new perspective on eighteenth-century reform efforts, not only in Italy but also elsewhere

in Europe.<sup>10</sup> However, while this shift away from both a Marxist and a more philosophy-driven study of the Enlightenment was generally appreciated, Venturi's writings also drew a number of criticisms on the grounds that he had failed to sufficiently recognise the presence of more radical elements within Enlightenment reform culture, notably the universalist or post-political ideas central to freemasonry as well as to various religious movements adhered to by many reformers.<sup>11</sup> This also applies to the urgency with which some of the most perceptive eighteenth-century political economists called for structural reforms – an urgency heightened by the sense of the very real possibility of the sudden breakdown of the European state system.<sup>12</sup> The price for Venturi's historiographical move, one might argue, is the relative absence of the explicit warning of (and in some quarters also hope for) revolution which can be found in some of the most insightful political texts from the Enlightenment period.

The debate over the possibility of separating in any plausible manner eighteenth-century reforms from revolution is of course not new but goes back to the French Revolution and its aftermath when the term reform first came to be defined in opposition to revolution.<sup>13</sup> Previously the term reform was used in a military context, describing the disbanding of a regiment and the integration of its parts into other regiments. More commonly, however, reform had a theological connotation, describing the Protestant reform of the early sixteenth century. It was only during the French Revolution that reform came to be widely associated with the cautious, non-violent, and reasoned change of political institutions with the aim of adapting them to accommodate the underlying social and economic developments. It is in this sense that Edmund Burke, in his *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, spoke of reform in order to highlight what he perceived constituted the fundamental difference between British and French politics.<sup>14</sup> It was because the British had constantly reformed their institutions, the argument went, that they had avoided the danger of revolution and in all likelihood would continue to do so. By the early nineteenth century this opposition between reform and revolution seemed less clear. This applies especially to the German context, where from the second decade of the nineteenth century onwards liberals, radicals, constitutionalists, anti-constitutionalists, and legitimists (not unlike Venturi, some one hundred and fifty years later) fought over how best to define their own position with regard to the purported institutional and philosophical legacy of the French Revolution. Central to this dispute was the debate over the right meaning of a set of terms such as reform, revolution, liberalism, and restoration as well as the connections that might be drawn between them.<sup>15</sup>

## 2. Reform and Liberalism

The aim of the present chapter is to highlight the particular dynamics of this language of reform by focussing on one particularly prolific

theorist of reform, the philosopher and publicist Wilhelm Traugott Krug (1770–1842), Kant's successor in Königsberg, and on his critique of the conservative jurist Karl Ludwig von Haller, a key figure of the German Restoration.<sup>16</sup> Educated at Schulpforta, Krug studied in Wittenberg, Jena, and Göttingen where he became an adept of Kantian philosophy. After teaching positions in Wittenberg, Frankfurt (Oder), and then Königsberg, in 1809 he moved to Leipzig where he occupied the chair in philosophy until his death in 1842. His academic claim to fame was a philosophical system called *transcendental synthesis* which, Krug argued, would overcome the opposition between idealism and realism.<sup>17</sup> Yet Krug's rise to prominence during the first third of the nineteenth century was due less to his philosophical system than to his outspoken support for German liberal constitutionalism, political and legal reform, the freedom of the press, and the emancipation of the Jews. He also positioned himself as one of the most vocal and persistent critics of conservative thinkers of the Restoration, notably Adam Müller and Karl Ludwig von Haller. It was in his essays directed against the restrictive politics of the German courts and their apologists that he formulated his ideas on reform. In one of his writings from 1816, *Sovereigns and Peoples with regard to their respective demands*, Krug described the idea of reform as follows:

Reforms in the human world often accomplish what revolutions bring about in the natural world, that is to say, a new order of things. The difference is that in the human world a reform achieves with intent, reflection, and cautiousness, what a revolution in nature (if we set aside a higher wisdom that lies beyond our understanding) achieves by means of blind violence and hence devastating forcefulness and in a destructive manner. If we neglect to reform in our human world and in our states: sooner or later nature (that is the peoples' drive for a better civil state, that acts by instinct and blind hatred) will revolutionise and destroy many good things amongst men that could have been saved, if reforms had been applied in time.<sup>18</sup>

Revolutions, it followed, were a force of nature and applied to the physical world, while reforms applied to human societies; one was destructive and uncontrollable, while the other was, at least in principle, gradual, controlled and willed by humans themselves. However, while humans were intellectual beings they were also part of nature, meaning that they too, and thus by extension their social arrangements, remained potentially open to the danger of revolution. Reform in that sense was what prevented humans from being utterly exposed to and determined by uncontrollable nature. Krug's message was clear enough. Reforms constituted an essential part of what allowed humans to determine their own fate. With this came a warning. Humans, Krug, argued, were driven by nature, expressed through a collective urge to attain a higher level of civil

freedom. Governments that failed to adequately respond to that natural urge through the instigation of reforms would inevitably have to face the consequences of nature asserting itself in the form of revolution.

Krug's discussion of the idea of reform reflected the uneasy position liberal thinkers of the *Vormärz* found themselves in.<sup>19</sup> Many of them had welcomed the achievements of the first period of the revolution and remained committed to defending the idea of constitutional reform, individual rights, and the rule of law. Faced with a mounting pressure from German politics to eradicate liberal tendencies, they had to distance themselves as much as possible from the revolution and shield themselves against the widespread accusation that Liberalism meant pursuing the Jacobin agenda by different means. Moreover, and to Krug very importantly, Liberals themselves had to be reassured that there was no viable alternative to slow, strenuous, but peaceful reforms, this despite the fact that the *Deutscher Bund* established at the Congress of Vienna had effectively quashed the Liberals' earlier hopes for German unification. Finally, Liberals needed to rebuff those thinkers of the Restoration who tried to claim the label of reform for their own programme by arguing that the real aim of the Restoration was not simply to turn back the clock and to re-establish the old order as it had existed prior to the French Revolution but to put in place institutional structures that would allow for what they called *true reform*. In his comments on the nature and aim of reforms Krug addressed all of these issues.

Early nineteenth-century thinkers were highly inventive when it came to forging new terms that were meant to define their own position as well as those of their opponents. In his *The false Liberalism of our time. A contribution to the history of Liberalism and a warning to future representatives of the people*, published in 1832, Krug drew a distinction between *True* and *False Liberalism*, thereby echoing a categorisation he had already established in the late 1810s when he separated *Ultra-liberalism*, from *True Liberalism*, and *Anti-liberalism*.<sup>20</sup> Only *True Liberalism*, Krug argued, was committed to peaceful reform.

True Liberalism wishes to reform, while the false one wants to revolutionise as soon as it encounters any opposition to the realisation of its plans. . . . They [the false liberals] prefer to sow and harvest on the same day. As if by magic, they would like to implement in one go all improvements they have imagined – and there are many such ideas, some highly problematic. But such a magic trick is not a reform which does not disturb the legal order and which following the course of nature aims to improve things gradually. Instead it is a revolution, a sudden reversal of all social bonds, which can hardly be achieved without civil war, scaffolds, and looting.<sup>21</sup>

Unlike in his *Sovereigns and Peoples*, where he had described reform in terms of the attempts by humans to control the unpredictable and

uncontrollable forces of nature that undermined their capacity for self-determination, Krug now saw liberal reforms as part of a natural development of human society. In some sense this was merely a question of emphasis rather than a real shift in his philosophical position. In so doing he picked up an argument laid out in greater detail in his history of Liberalism of 1823, *Historical Presentation of Ancient and Modern Liberalism*.<sup>22</sup> Krug intended his history as a call for moderation aimed at those who seemed increasingly impatient with the conservative politics of the German courts and who ridiculed the idea that the Holy Alliance presented a stepping-stone towards a more liberal Europe. Liberal reformers, he claimed, could find strength for their commitment to continuous gradual, peaceful change in the knowledge that history was on their side. As Krug saw it Liberalism was merely a different name for man's natural striving for cultural and moral improvement and the realisation of a law-governed society, a phenomenon that, he believed, could be traced all the way back to antiquity. Since this period, Liberalism had been in constant conflict with the opposing force of Anti-liberalism. Although the ultimate outcome of this struggle could not be predicted with any certainty, Liberalism's longevity and resilience, added to the growing number of its adepts, suggested that man's ascent could not be stopped indefinitely.

We have seen that liberal ideas are in fact as old as the higher education of mankind, and that while periodically they vanished from the face of the earth, they always returned with renewed force and continued to spread. This seems to be confirmed by their endurance and dissemination, so that we can feel assured, without any pretension of prophetic enlightenment, that Anti-liberalism will never overcome Liberalism.<sup>23</sup>

Krug was at pains to show that the Liberals' belief in the rightfulness of their cause and its ultimate triumph was not derived from any overtly teleological understanding of the development of human society. Human progress was largely the unintended product of nature; Liberals merely recognised nature's plan for man and tried to make it their own, independently of any certain knowledge of success. In a typically Kantian fashion Krug insisted that a state of perfect justice and the rule of law could never actually be achieved but only approximated. This point was made more explicit in his *Diäkopolitik, or New Restauration of Political Science through the Law of Right* of 1824, where Krug argued that:

From what has previously been said it is clear that the best form of the state is in fact only an ideal, one that actual states can merely approximate but never accomplish, because under the existing circumstances they can only strive for what is relatively the best. But even this they cannot ever fully realise. For it is the fate of humankind to never achieve anything perfect. For this reason, wherever a

new constitution is being drafted, a final paragraph should explicitly state that from time to time the constitution should be revised in light of the experiences gathered since and in order to accommodate for new needs.<sup>24</sup>

The liberal state as an idea was rational, Krug explained in his essay “The Ideal of a perfect State”, and it was its rationality that provided the moral obligation for Liberals as well as other cultivated members of the *Öffentlichkeit* to pursue a continuous reform in order to narrow the gap between idea and fact.

It is therefore an unquestionable demand of reason that we should, in all things and hence also in matters of a state’s constitution, strive for what is better and more perfect, even if we cannot ever attain the best or absolute perfection. The ideal of the best constitution hence can at no point in time ever be presented [dargestellt], since the task of its realisation is infinite. And yet, anything humanly possible should be undertaken if it contributes to its solution. We should at least aim to reach the ultimate goal, even if though we can never reach it.<sup>25</sup>

The moral stamina of Liberals seemed all the more important in that *Staatsreformen*, political reforms, in contrast to *Staatsrevolutionen*, required the coordinated effort of both the government acting within a constitutional setting and the *Öffentlichkeit*, the enlightened public. The actual reform itself, if it were to avoid transforming into a revolution, always had to be initiated from the top, limiting the role of the *Öffentlichkeit* to that of voicing reasonable concerns about existing social and political shortcomings.

This is the true meaning of the well-known demand that all civil reforms [*Staatsreformen*] should come from above. The encouragement to this can however also come from below, if certain citizens who feel incommoded by certain orders or institutions request a solution, or if those whose insights or status within civil society enable them to make judgments draw the government’s attention to matters that require reform. However, reforms should always rightfully be initiated by the government.<sup>26</sup>

### 3. Liberalism and Revolution

Besides aiming to encourage fellow Liberals to persevere in their efforts Krug also hoped to deliver a blow to the political ideas of the Swiss self-taught jurist Karl Ludwig von Haller, whose work had gained him special favours with the court of Frederick William III as well as parts of the Prussian landed nobility.<sup>27</sup> There is no doubt that Krug (and in a

different way also Hegel) considered Haller as the epitome of reactionary Anti-liberalism.<sup>28</sup> In his monumental six-volume *Restauration der Staats-Wissenschaft*, published between 1816 and 1834, Haller laid out the principle of his theory of the Patrimonial State, which he presented as a corrective to the fundamental instability of the modern state. Volume One contained a conceptual history of Enlightenment political thought (probably the first of its kind) where Haller sought to draw a direct line from Hobbes to Rousseau, Kant and the Jacobins of revolutionary France. Haller saw a close correlation between the spread of ideas, notably the idea of a social contract as the legitimate source of political authority, and the French Revolution, claiming that by relying almost exclusively on a republican-style terminology for describing existing political and social institutions, eighteenth-century writers created expectations (close to what Koselleck later called *Erwartungshorizont*) that opened the way not only for reforms, but also for violent and abrupt political change. Although Haller was mainly preoccupied with Rousseau, he also directly attacked Kant and his followers for presenting the modern constitutional state as a rational idea that men were morally obliged to strive for.

With Kant emerged a new school, a variation of the same revolutionary sect, that does not speak of known, original facts, of hypotheses, but of ideals or postulates of reason, of continuous reforms, of the gradual realisation of a legal [rechtlich] state and so on, but which basically strives for the same goals, and which, because of its disguise and apparent moderation, is even far more dangerous and enchanting than all French revolutionary ideas put together.<sup>29</sup>

According to Haller there thus existed only a marginal difference between the radically democratic republicanism of Rousseau and Kantian Liberals like Krug. This was partly due to their shared theoretical language that drew on the political terminology of Roman law. More importantly, however, because Liberals operated within the conceptual framework of Rousseau and Hobbes they lacked the theoretical tools allowing them to sufficiently distance themselves from the Rousseauean state which, Haller believed, the Jacobins had unsuccessfully tried to put in place. Instead of continuing their mistaken attempt to disarm the explosive nature of Rousseau's state theory through a theory of representation, Haller argued, Liberals should have simply thrown overboard the entire conceptual baggage that they had adopted from the authors of the *Contrat Social* and the *Leviathan*.

The terminological confusion that marred eighteenth-century and early nineteenth-century reform language, Haller argued, was directly linked to what he called the common *idolatry of Roman Law* noticeable in much of late seventeenth-century political and legal literature. This phenomenon could be traced back to at least the political debates surrounding the

English Commonwealth. From there it spread to the European mainland where it was picked up by natural jurists, political advisers, and ministers. The problem with Roman law, according to Haller, was that it contained “almost exclusively a republican terminology” which was then applied indiscriminately to any form of political society, irrespective of whether these states were principalities or republics. What once had been labelled a *Gemeinde* was now called a *societas civilis*, while principalities became *civitates* and *respublicas*. Common subjects were described as *cives*, while vassals, estates, and those who served in the princely household suddenly became known as *comitia* or popular assemblies ruled by majority voting.<sup>30</sup> By systematically redefining social relations, which up to the Middle Ages had been covered by private law into public ones, early modern commentators established a political and juridical language that became separated from the historical context from which it had emerged. Originally the Roman *civitas* and *res publica* referred to the private community of legally equal Roman citizens. Nothing distinguished the Roman republic from other communities in the Italian peninsula at the time but the fact that it remained independent from any of the neighbouring principalities. A republic, Haller kept insisting, was nothing else but an independent community. Like ancient kings the Roman republic also pursued its *own thing* and exerted authority over conquered tribes who were privately bound to the collective sovereign. No outsider had any intrinsic right to become a Roman citizen nor could anyone be lawfully forced into entering the Roman *universitas*. When Roman law was codified under imperial rule the distinctly private feature of the original Roman *civitas* was lost.<sup>31</sup>

Like in the case of the Roman emperors who claimed the succession to the Roman republic, early modern sovereigns, too, declared themselves rulers of a commonwealth. For Haller this rediscovery of the Roman legal terminology and its application to early modern European politics had far-reaching consequences. In effect it signalled the beginning of the end of *natural politics* and the rise of an ideological understanding of political society where the new terminology no longer adequately reflected the underlying sociological and anthropological realities of human relations. “The erroneous use of language”, Haller claimed, “the imperfection of signs was and remains even today a source of endless errors. The meaning of falsely applied words was forced onto things, whereas the terms ought to have been adapted to fit new circumstances.”<sup>32</sup> Although Haller expressed his bafflement regarding the eagerness with which seventeenth-century natural jurists came to embrace this neo-Roman political theory, he recognised the obvious advantages it granted to the often cash-stricken sovereigns of early modern Europe, the most obvious one being that it provided sovereigns with the means allowing them to draw upon fiscal resources that had been thus far unavailable. If up to the end of the medieval period the political action of kings was more often than not determined by the material basis of their *patrimonium*, their private domain, having

reinvented themselves as quasi-republican emperors they could now lay claim to the fiscal and military reserves of the entire nation and, with the development of new fiscal instruments such as the public debt, even speculate on the economic return of future generations. What hitherto had been considered the private property of individuals, corporations, communities, or estates was gradually seen to constitute part of a national wealth, open to being taxed accordingly.

By calling themselves the highest officers of the people, their wars became legally speaking national wars [Volks-Kriege], their debts became national debts, their own needs became those of the nation; conscriptions, arbitrary taxes, mandatory services of all sorts could easily be put forward and justified through the idea of a commonwealth and an imagined popular sovereignty. Private laws and private contracts with individuals and corporations were no longer valid, once the so-called national goals or the interest of the majority or the presumed popular will was declared the origin of all law.<sup>33</sup>

For Haller the language of Enlightenment reforms perfectly illustrated this point. By the middle of the century, he claimed, the political language in Europe had become entirely republican.<sup>34</sup> The first of these grand reforms, that of Pombal in Portugal, was proof that the influence of neo-Roman political thought had already reached the highest echelons of society. The same applied to Catherine II of Russia and the “curious spectacle of a kind of Russian national assembly” which the empress deemed necessary in order to legitimise her envisaged legislative reforms.<sup>35</sup> Even Frederick II of Prussia seemed to toy with such ideas when he declared that “un prince est le premier serviteur de l'état”.<sup>36</sup> While his personal musings were of little consequence, on the other hand the *Allgemeines Landrecht für die Preussischen Staaten*, initiated during his reign, showed the extent to which his administration had fallen under the sway of the “new-philosophical principles”:

This legal code speaks in dark and ambiguous terms only of the state and the head of state (which the next day could also consist of a *Directorio*), of servants of the state, of the rights of the state, as well as of the duties of its head. . . . Domains and regalian rights are declared to be common state property, the use of which was reserved for the head of state.<sup>37</sup>

Joseph II’s wide reaching economic and administrative reforms in Tuscany, his edict of toleration, and the secularisation of church property were merely the most extreme examples showing how a modern sovereign had relied on the language of a distinctly modern form of republicanism in order to shed off the institutional constraints of traditional kingship.

The flipside of this newly acquired power was that the increase of a sovereign's material wealth came with a decline both in his moral authority and material independence. The pathological dynamics of this process of continuous republicanisation of European politics was laid bare during the crisis of the Old Order in the years prior to the French Revolution when the king's subjects and vassals, Haller argued, claimed the rights and political role that many had come to associate with the idea of citizen. Also, in the same way as early modern kings were no longer limited in their actions by the size of their private domain the *patrimonium* of the French king could now be described as belonging to the nation itself. The execution of Louis XVI was merely the ultimate and logical expression of the political and philosophical process set in motion through the ahistorical application of a Roman legal terminology.

Haller insisted that so long as Liberals like Krug remained wedded to the conceptual framework of Hobbes, Rousseau, and Kant there was little reason to assume that they would fare any better than the first generation of revolutionaries who had hoped to stabilise the neo-Roman *civitas* by giving it the form of a constitutional monarchy. As Haller remarked in his *De quelques denominations de partis* of 1822, "Never underestimate the power of words: for too long have they exercised a murky rule!"<sup>38</sup> Words mattered very much and it was hence only through the establishing of a new political language whose concepts adequately described the socio-economic realities of human society that the spectre of continuous revolution could be banished. What modern readers really needed, Haller argued, was a *dictionnaire libéral* that would help them to make sense of the current political discourse: "This language, or rather this liberal jargon, is in effect very peculiar: it resembles French expressions or locutions, but taken in their ordinary meaning, one understands nothing and often laughs at these obvious absurdities."<sup>39</sup> Amongst the terms Haller believed needed to be discussed were *reason*, *liberty*, *equality*, *humanity*, *human dignity*, *civilisation*, *despotism*, and *privilege*.<sup>40</sup> Put together it would cut through the thicket of party denominations and show the underlying ideological continuity from the Jacobins to those who now called themselves moderate Liberals:

despite the protestations of those who claim not to be Jacobins, we will tell them that they were either their master, disciples, or satellites; and that the Jacobins, in strict sense, were probably merely the strongest and most determined of their group.<sup>41</sup>

Consequently it was of little importance whether these various groups called themselves patriots, revolutionaries, republicans, Jacobins, anti-Bonapartists, independents, moderates, or liberal monarchists. Hence

in a subsequently published *Fragmens d'un dictionnaire libéral* Haller argued that

when liberals and revolutionaries of all countries speak of having constitutions in monarchies . . . they understand this to mean, in the strict sense of the term, the transformation, sometimes softly and sometimes violently, of a monarchy into a republic.<sup>42</sup>

The underlying revolutionary principles would even be detected in the liberal deployment of the term *civilisation*. Civilisation, Haller argued in an ironically titled *Justification de M. Guizot*, was used by Liberals in a literal sense to describe the on-going politicisation of society: “the so-called liberals, or the modern revolutionaries, much more precise than one thinks in their use of language, masters in the art of deceiving without lying . . . understand civilisation quite simply to mean *civification*.” The term civilisation was thus “completely synonymous with what nowadays is called revolution”.<sup>43</sup>

#### 4. Idea and Nature

Haller’s insistence on the role eighteenth-century reform language had played in setting off the French Revolution was met with a series of rebukes, notably by Krug. In his essay *The political science in the process of Restoration of Mrs. von Haller, Adam Müller, and the likes, considered* of 1817 he even identified this as the *Grundirrthum*, the main error of Haller’s *Restauration*.

First, we must unveil a fundamental error that runs throughout the entire book, which probably prompted it and which has ensnared not only its author but many other brave men. This fundamental error concerns the relation between science and life. For Mr. Haller thinks that science constitutes life, whereas on the contrary life constitutes science.<sup>44</sup>

Krug strongly objected to the idea that words could be held responsible for moral decay, let alone revolution. In an earlier essay from 1796, *On the influence of philosophy*, where he sought to defend the followers of Kant against accusations of spearheading revolutionary activities in Germany, he made a similar argument by pointing out the lowly status professors enjoyed in German society.<sup>45</sup> The more stringent argument, however, was that ideas had only limited influence on human action; philosophy could clarify and confirm what “nature itself implanted indestructibly into our heart, of what we should do, believe and hope for”.<sup>46</sup> To the extent that philosophy could be said to have any influence on

human action it could thus only be “most positive and benevolent”.<sup>47</sup> In his *The political science in the process of Restoration* Krug developed this argument further. What Haller and others had branded a new political science, derived from an ahistorical and erroneous understanding of ancient social institutions, was in fact only one part of an encompassing *Lebenswissenschaft*, a life science, that reflected the sum total of all of humans’ theoretical and practical experiences, their material and intellectual needs, and their cognitive restraints. Reason could bring these experiences into form, but since reason itself was conditioned by human existence and only through interaction with life could conceive of the idea of a science, the two – reason and life – were closely intertwined. From this Krug concluded, “science can reflect back onto life, which prompts it; but it cannot itself create life, in the same way as a mirror cannot create the light it reflects”.<sup>48</sup> Hence life was reflected in science. The same applied to political science which merely reflected *the entire civic life*. The causes for any changes in political life could only be discovered in political life itself and not in its reflecting science.<sup>49</sup> The French Revolution was a case in point. While Krug agreed with Haller that eighteenth-century political theory, including that of the French Revolution, was directly inspired by the writings of Hobbes, Sidney, and Locke, he rejected any immediate causality between their ideas and the civil upheaval of 1789 on the grounds that seventeenth-century British political thought was itself merely a reflection of the actual political experiences during and after the Commonwealth. If it appealed to subsequent Enlightenment reform thinkers, it did so only in so far as it formalised a new social and political reality or a new level of European political life that eighteenth-century observers were able to recognise as the one they inhabited. If there was an “original cause” of the French Revolution, it could be found rather in what Krug called the general corruption of all civic life in France and in the widespread awareness of this state of affairs.<sup>50</sup>

The French revolution was thus not the fruit of the new political science or of some of its false principles, but the natural and necessary result of the ways in which the civic life in France up to that moment was formed, or rather misformed.<sup>51</sup>

In the same way as Enlightenment reform thinking had been indebted to the seventeenth-century philosophical reflection of British political life, post-revolutionary liberal thought reflected the political experiences of the French Revolution and the new reality of early nineteenth-century German society. This alone, Krug argued, showed why the process of Restoration as imagined in the writings of Haller and Müller was bound to fail: “If the Old is to be restored, it can only be done by means of force, not with the help of the pen.”<sup>52</sup> Although he admitted that political science could in turn influence ongoing events and thus help to shape

both institutional and moral change, “because it is a product of life and because one cannot, as with a Chinese wall, separate teaching from life”,<sup>53</sup> it could only do so in so far as it managed to capture the *Zeitgeist* of present social and civic life.<sup>54</sup>

Haller’s intention, Krug and others claimed, was to freeze European societies in a medieval slumber. As a result he had little to contribute to a theoretical discussion of reform, either retrospectively for the eighteenth century or for the present. While indeed Haller, in his voluminous writing, hardly ever uses the term reform, he made it clear that he was in no way categorically opposed to reform. Quite to the contrary, the whole idea of his *Restauration*, according to Haller, was to find the kind of institutional arrangement that would be sufficiently flexible so as to accommodate continuous and inevitable social and economic change. Haller’s answer here was what he called the Patrimonial State, a purely private law-based institution where sovereignty remained the private property of either a king or an independent republic. Such private states, Haller claimed, would remain in a constant state of flux and had to continuously readjust their position according to the economic success or otherwise of their subjects. States that failed to reposition themselves with regard to surrounding social and economic actors would lose their independence and find themselves relegated to the lower status of a simple lord or, in the case of republics, that of a dependent commune. Patrimonial States would hence have a vital interest in increasing the economic productivity of their household and improving the efficiency of their administration. According to Haller’s scenario, reforming the Patrimonial State affected neither the economic life nor the private rights of those under its protection, as the sovereign could not act in the name of the nation. Consequently there could be no symbolic conflation of the social and the political as had happened over the course of the eighteenth century.

## 5. Conclusion

The real enemy of Haller’s *Restauration*, some of his followers claimed, was hence not reform but merely revolution.<sup>55</sup> Also, contemporary readers recognised that Haller’s model for his idea of Patrimonial State was less the medieval kingship but his native Bern, which during the second half of the eighteenth century had held a special place in the European debates on economic and especially agrarian reforms. As president of the *Economic Society of Bern* during the early 1790s Haller became a key player in these debates, calling amongst other things for the radical deregulation of the economy in Bern’s vast subject territory.<sup>56</sup> Krug himself seemed to acknowledge Haller’s reformist credentials when claiming that Haller could be counted amongst the friends of mankind, “he is no friend of despotism”, even though his political principles ultimately supported such tendencies.<sup>57</sup> Comparing Krug and Haller with regard

to eighteenth-century languages of reform does not downplay the real philosophical differences between the two. Rather, it highlights the central importance of the heritage of Enlightenment reform discourse for early nineteenth-century early Liberalism and its attempt to repudiate any backwards linkage to Jacobinism. More importantly, perhaps, the confrontation between the two thinkers offers a way into substantive philosophical differences *within* Enlightenment reform discourse that are hardly mentioned in Venturi's sweeping study. Scholars following Venturi's lead have invariably distinguished between a radical and a conservative Enlightenment. Yet if Haller is to be believed the divide should rather be located in the way in which reform thinkers either adopted or rejected a political terminology derived from Roman law. The Bern reform movement, Haller believed, by and large consciously rejected the latter and instead tried to formulate its reform agenda within a conceptual framework of common law and what the Bernese perceived to be the Germanic origins of Swiss municipal law. Haller claimed there were other reformers in various parts of Europe who acted and thought along these premises. Clearly the adherence or not to Roman law-inspired reform language was not the only point of contention amongst reformers. However, looking at Enlightenment languages of reform through the lens of Krug and Haller helps to gain a better sense not just of the variety of reform discourse that cannot be adequately captured with reference to either a radical, conservative, republican, or monarchical Enlightenment. It also invites us to pay more attention to the urgency with which certain reformers sought to understand and fend off the spectre of revolution.

## Notes

1. The author would like to thank Madeleine Dungy, Isaac Nakhimovsky, John Robertson, and Michael Sonenscher for their comments and editorial assistance.
2. K.L. von Haller, *De quelques dénominations de partis, pour servir à l'intelligence des journaux et de plusieurs autres écrits modernes* (Genève: Guers Père, 1822), 47.
3. F. Venturi, *Utopia and Reform in the Enlightenment* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971). Perhaps jokingly, Venturi claimed that he had originally intended to call his Trevelyan Lectures “Was ist Aufklärung?”, an obvious swipe at both Kant and Cassirer. *Ibid.*, 2.
4. *Ibid.*, 2.
5. I am referring here to the abbreviated English edition of his six-volume *Settecento Riformatore* (1969–1998): *The End of the Old Regime in Europe*, trans. R. Burr Litchfield, 3 vols. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1989–1991).
6. Venturi, *Utopia and Reform*, 1.
7. R. Koselleck, *Kritik und Krise: Ein Studie zur Pathogenese der bürgerlichen Welt* (1959; repr., Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1973); translated into English as *Critique and Crisis: Enlightenment and the Pathogenesis of Modern Society* (Cambridge, MA: Massachusetts Institute of Technology Press, 1999). Venturi in his writing never even as much as acknowledged Koselleck.

8. See e.g. his chapter “The European Enlightenment”, in *Italy and the Enlightenment: Studies in a Cosmopolitan Century*, ed. F Venturi, et al. (New York, NY: New York University Press, 1972), 1–32.
9. Venturi’s idea of crisis is discussed in R. Burr Litchfield, ‘Franco Venturi’s ‘crisis’ of the Old Regime’, *Journal of Modern Italian Studies*, 10(2): 2005, 234–244.
10. See, for example, D. Beales, *Enlightenment and Reform in Eighteenth-Century Europe* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2005); and more specifically his study of Austrian reforms, *Joseph II: In the Shadow of Maria Theresia, 1741–1780* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987); *Joseph II. Against the World, 1780–1790* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987); T.C. Blanning, ed., *The Eighteenth Century: Europe 1688–1815* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).
11. See the insightful review by J. Robertson, “Franco Venturi’s Enlightenment”, *Past and Present*, no. 137 (November 1992): 183–206; see also the various contributions to M. Albertone, ed., *Il Repubblicanesimo Moderno: L’idea di repubblica nella riflessione storica di Franco Venturi* (Naples: Bibliopolis, 2006).
12. For a recent analysis of eighteenth-century reform thinking set against the background of a hypothetical revolution see I. Hont, B. Kapossy, and M. Sonenscher, eds., *Politics in Commercial Society: Jean-Jacques Rousseau and Adam Smith* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2015).
13. See E. Wolgast, “Reform, Reformation”, in *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe: Historisches Lexikon zur politisch-sozialen Sprache*, ed. O. Brunner, W. Conze, and R. Koselleck (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1984), 5:313–360; see also the contribution by G. Schlueter in the present volume.
14. On Burke see the recent study by R. Bourke, *Empire and Revolution: The Political Life of Edmund Burke* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2017).
15. On Liberalism see the detailed study by J. Leonhard, *Liberalismus: Zur historischen Semantik eines europäischen Deutungsmusters* (Munich: Oldenbourg, 2001). For a wider historical discussion of early nineteenth-century German reform see K. Tribe, “Revision, Reorganization, and Reform: Prussia, 1790–1820”, in *Markets, Morals, Politics: Jealousy of Trade and the History of Political Thought*, ed. B. Kapossy, et al. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2018), 136–160. For Restauration see especially R. Roggen, “Restauration” Kampfruf und Schimpfwort: Eine Kommunikationsanalyse zum Hauptwerk des Staatstheoretikers Karl Ludwig von Haller (1768–1854) (Freiburg: Universitätsverlag Freiburg Schweiz, 1999).
16. On Krug’s political and philosophical position see U. Brackes, “Der Philosoph Wilhelm Traugott Krug: Seine Stellung im vormärzlichen Liberalismus und sein Wirken für die Judenemanzipation in Sachsen”, in *Bausteine einer jüdischen Geschichte der Universität Leipzig*, ed. S. Wendehorst (Leipzig: Leipziger Universitätsverlag, 2006), 483–504; A. Fiedler, *Die staatswissenschaftlichen Anschauungen und die politisch-publizistische Tätigkeit des Nachkantianers Wilhelm Traugott Krug* (Dresden: Risse Verlag, 1933); for information regarding Krug’s early life see his autobiographical text, *Meine Lebensreise: In sechs Stazionen zur Belehrung der Jugend und zur Unterhaltung des Alters geschrieben* (Leipzig: Baumgärtnersche Buchhandlung, 1825). A further section covering the period up to 1830 was added to a subsequent edition of 1842.
17. Krug developed his philosophy in his *Handbuch der Philosophie und der philosophischen Literatur*, 2 vols. (Leipzig: Brockhaus, 1820–1821).

18. W.T. Krug, “Die Fürsten und die Völker in ihren gegenseitigen Forderungen: Nebst einer Zugabe Ancillon’s Schrift über die Souveränität und Staatsverfassungen betreffend (1816)”, in *Politische und juridische Schriften*, ed. W.T. Krug (Braunschweig, 1834), 1:225.
19. There is a wide literature on German political movements during the Vormärz; for a general introduction see D. Langewiesche, *Europa und Revolution 1815–1849* (München: Oldenbourg, 2004); also, W. Conze, ed., *Staat und Gesellschaft im deutschen Vormärz 1815–1848* (Stuttgart: Klett, 1962); U. Backes, *Liberalismus und Demokratie-Autonomie und Synthese: Zum Wechselverhältnis zweier politischer Strömungen im Vormärz* (Düsseldorf: Droste, 2000); and P. Wende, *Radikalismus im Vormärz: Untersuchungen zur politischen Theorie der frühen deutschen Demokratie* (Wiesbaden: F. Steiner, 1975).
20. See U. Brackes, *Politische Extreme: Eine Wort- und Begriffsgeschichte von der Antike bis in die Gegenwart* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 2006).
21. W.T. Krug, *Der falsche Liberalismus unserer Zeit: Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte des Liberalismus und eine Mahnung für künftige Volksvertreter* (Leipzig: Ch.E. Kollmann, 1832), 46.
22. W.T. Krug, *Geschichtliche Darstellung des Liberalismus alter und neuer Zeit: Ein historischer Versuch* (Leipzig: Brockhaus, 1823).
23. Ibid., 142.
24. W.T. Krug, *Diäkopolitik, oder Neue Restaurazion der Staatswissenschaften mittels des Rechtsgesetzes* (Leipzig: C.H.F. Hartmann, 1824), 292.
25. W.T. Krug, “Ueber das Ideal eines perfekten Staates”, in *Politische und juridische Schriften*, ed. W.T. Krug (Braunschweig: Friedrich Vieweg, 1834), 1:41.
26. Ibid., 295.
27. Several of Krug’s writings, including *The Science of Politics in the Process of Restoration* of 1817 and the *History of Liberalism* of 1823 took direct aim at Haller. A modern, comprehensive study of Krug as a critic of Restoration political theory is still missing.
28. Perhaps the most explicit attack on Haller by Krug can be found in his contribution to the Europe-wide debate prompted by Haller’s conversion to Catholicism in 1820; see Krug, *Sendschreiben des Herrn von Haller an seine Familie, betreffend seinen Uebertritt zur katholischen Kirche, und geprüft vom Professor Krug* (Leipzig: s.n., 1821); a second enlarged edition was printed the same year, *Apologie der protestantischen Kirche gegen die Verunglimpfungen des Herrn von Haller in dessen Sendschreiben an seine Familie* (Leipzig: Reinsche Buchhandlung, 1821).
29. K.L. von Haller, *Restauration der Staats-Wissenschaft, oder Theorie des natürliche-geselligen Zustands, der Chimäre des künstlich-bürgerlichen entgegengesetzt, von Carl Ludwig von Haller, des souverainen wie auch des geheimen Raths der Republik Bern, der Königl. Gesellschaft der Wissenschaften zu Göttingen correspondierendem Mitglied etc.* (Winterthur, 1816–1834), 1:71–72. All references are to the second edition 6 vols., Winterthur, 1820–1834, reprinted 6 vols., Aalen, 1964. On Haller, see R. Roggen, ‘Restauration’; K. Guggisberg, *Carl Ludwig von Haller* (Frauenfeld: Huber & Co., 1938); W.H. von Sonntag, *Die Staatsauffassung Carl Ludwig v. Hallers, ihre metaphysische Grundlegung und ihre politische Formung* (Jena: Gustav Fischer, 1929); E. Reinhard, *Karl Ludwig von Haller, der Restaurator der Staatswissenschaft* (Münster: Wirtschafts- und Sozialwissenschaftlicher Verlag, 1933). For an extended bibliography, see A. Portmann-Tinguely, “Haller, Karl Ludwig von”, in *Biographisch-Bibliographisches Kirchenlexikon*, ed. F.W. Bautz and T. Bautz (Herzberg: Bautz, 1975–2007), 17:587–614.

30. Ibid., 89–91.
31. For Haller Krug clearly belonged to this group. See e.g. Krug's "Ueber die Eintheilung der Staatsformen in die monarchische, aristokratische und demokratische" of 1806 where he defined "republic" in the general sense as a state whose aim was to preserve the "common good". The old Swiss republics, meanwhile, qualified as moderate or "syncretic" monarchies because here sovereignty was usually rendered visible through the figurehead of the Avoyer, who governed in unison with a number of magistrates representing the people, Volksrepräsentanten, in *Politische und juridische Schriften*, Vol. 1, Braunschweig: Friedrich Vieweg, 25.
32. Ibid., 91.
33. Haller, *Restauration*, 1:178.
34. See particularly chapter VII of Vol. 1, entitled "Philosophische Geschichte dieser Theorie", Ibid., 80–227.
35. Ibid., 182.
36. Ibid., 189.
37. Ibid., 196.
38. Haller, *De quelques dénominations de partis*, 42.
39. Ibid., 3–4.
40. Ibid., 5.
41. Ibid., 17.
42. K.L. von Haller, "Fragmens d'un dictionnaire libéral", in *Etudes historiques sur les révolutions d'Espagne et de Portugal*, ed. K.L. von Haller (Paris: A. Allouard, 1841), 1:251.
43. K.L. von Haller, "Sens moderne du mot civilisation. Justification de M. Guizot", in *Etudes historiques sur les révolutions d'Espagne et de Portugal*, ed. K.L. von Haller (Paris: A. Allouard, 1841), 2:12–13.
44. W.T. Krug, *Die Staatswissenschaft im Restaurationsprozesse der Herren von Haller, Adam Müller und Konsorten betrachtet* (Leipzig: Gerhard Fleischer, 1917), 17–18.
45. W.T. Krug, *Über den Einfluss der Philosophie, sowohl überhaupt, als insbesonderheit der kritischen, auf Sittlichkeit: Religion und Menschenwohl: Eine Vorlesung gehalten beym Anfange eines philosophischen Kursus* (Jena: Voigt, 1796).
46. Ibid., 18.
47. Ibid., 22.
48. Krug, *Die Staatswissenschaft im Restaurationsprozesse*, 21.
49. Ibid., 22.
50. Ibid., 24.
51. Ibid., 27.
52. Ibid., 39.
53. Ibid., 35.
54. Ibid., 40.
55. See for example T. Schaerrer, *Revoluzion und Restaurazion der Staatswissenschaft, historisch und kritisch dargestellt* (Luzern: Gebrüder Räber, 1842).
56. See for example K.L. von Haller, "Abhandlung über den freyen Kauf und Verkauf der Butter im Canton Bern", in *Neueste Sammlung von Abhandlungen und Beobachtungen. Herausgegeben von der ökonomischen Gesellschaft in Bern* (Bern: Emanuel Haller, 1796), 264–296. Haller's Bernese background receives special attention in Guggisberg, *Carl Ludwig von Haller*; see also B. Kapossy, "La Restauration et l'idée de l'Etat privée: La vision de Charles-Louis de Haller sur la réforme européenne", *Annales Fribourgeoises* 79 (2017): 15–27; and more generally on Bern, B. Kapossy, "Die Republik Bern

- und die europäische Aufklärung”, in *Hôtel de Musique und Grande Société in Bern. 1759–2009*, ed. G. von Erlach (Bern: Stämpfli, 2009), 15–31.
57. Krug, *Die Staatswissenschaft im Restaurationsprozesse*, 17.

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# Conclusion

## Bringing a Despotic Agenda Into the Public Sphere – Concluding Remarks on Languages of Reform

*Thomas Maissen*

Ne méconnaissons pas la puissance des mots: trop long-temps ils ont exercé un funeste empire! . . . Soyons donc fidèles, non-seulement à Dieu et à notre Roi, mais encore à la vérité, et au langage qui en est l'expression

Let us not underestimate the power of words: for too long have they exercised a deadly rule! . . . Let us therefore rely not only on God and our king, but also on truth and on the one language which is its expression.

—Karl Ludwig von Haller, 1822<sup>1</sup>

Karl Ludwig von Haller (1768–1854) has remained present in political history as the eponym of the *Restauration* (Restoration) for the period from 1815 to 1830 in Europe. This seems an appropriate reward for a declared enemy of the Enlightenment and Revolution, who was very aware that the previous world-historical revaluations and schools of thought were, not least, a work of language. Those who called themselves *philosophes* and Liberals dismissed their opponents as obscurantists and fanatical Ultras. In Haller's eyes, however, the latter were representatives of justice and a natural social order that opposed the revolutionary sophists and liars, anarchists and Jacobins – not least on the battlefield of party concepts. When Haller called for the language of truth to be used he meant a particular language among the many competing languages of his time, the one that expressed the God-given order: his own truth. This was a different truth, and thus a different language, from the noble but empty words of the promoters of a “réforme radicale”, a radical realisation of freedom, equality, and popular sovereignty.<sup>2</sup>

Examples of linguistic change during certain decades of the Enlightenment have been presented in this book. At the end of those decades the language itself and the use of language as a means of reform dynamics were analysed and, in the case of Haller, criticised. This volume depicts this slow process of consciousness-building. Originally, and following the existing research literature, the initiators of the project proceeded on the principal assumption that the concept of *reform* underwent a fundamental change early in the eighteenth century, the age Franco Venturi labelled

*Settecento riformatore* in his homonymous opus. They expected *reform* to be very affirmatively associated with an intentional and systematic overcoming of long-established but unjustified deficiencies. Furthermore, and following Reinhart Koselleck, they presumed a growing cleavage, as far as human actions are concerned, between “spaces of experience” and “horizons of expectation”, leading to an increased readiness to legitimise far-reaching breaks with entrenched habits – even if the consequences that the viable alternatives entailed were not entirely predictable at the moment of decision.<sup>3</sup> In the event of a continuous and accelerated transformation of the perspectives, means, and ends of societal action, so the contributors believed, the persistent recourse to timeless precedents and rules of action as they originated in Christian morality became less and less powerful. Finally, the authors of this volume took it as given that eighteenth-century contemporaries identified their respective futures as open for development and, therefore, faced them with an increasing desire for shaping.

Contrary to this initial point, the present case studies suggest that the clear-cut scheme that existing research suggests needs to be revised considerably. This volume reveals the fact that for a long time, striving for reform was conceived within the traditional figures of reasoning and that the *back-to-the-good-old-ways* line was more than just a rhetorical argument. The direction of reform remained unaltered and the term itself maintained its original, retrospective meaning, as in the Latin word *re-formare* (and similarly *re-volvere*, for revolution). It is well known, and several studies in this volume demonstrate it again, that *reformatio* and *réforme*, first documented in French in 1625, with their further variants in the vernaculars, were traditionally thought of – and continued to be thought of well into the eighteenth century – as the restoration of an earlier, unadulterated state. In this respect reform was close to the idea of a correction (*correctio*, also *restitutio*), which becomes necessary when the original state established by God has been corrupted by time and by human activity. From the end of the seventeenth century, in addition to *restoration* (*rétablissement dans l'ancienne forme*) the idea of *improvement* arose (“dans une meilleure forme”, according to the 1694 Académie française dictionary). It was increasingly extended from the moral-religious sphere to the institutional-political sphere. In this volume Gisela Schlüter opposes the two meanings of reform as the “retrospective, past-oriented restorative notion” and the “prospective, future-oriented melioristic notion”.

## Change Between Authority and Caution

To tie this conceptual change to historical and constitutional developments it should be noted that the spread of melioristic connotations went along with rapidly growing room for manoeuvre in the shaping of secular rule. Since Jean Bodin's *Six livres de la République* (1576) this could be

legitimised by the doctrine of sovereignty: For the common good, and especially in a state of emergency (*necessitas*), the sovereign no longer had to abide by the existing law but could repeal old laws and enact new ones. The “puissance de donner et casser la loi”, as Bodin defined the sovereign’s core competence, was increasingly not only a theoretical claim but also a programme – rulership, and in particular absolute rule, defined and legitimised itself through the ability to identify and remedy grievances. The norms of the past or of divine order (with their disadvantages and limitations that humankind could understand only with difficulty, but previously had fatalistically accepted) served less and less as guidelines. A rational will to rule increasingly defined the motives, means, and objectives of political action that led to a process of ongoing and lasting change. In this respect *reform* could become, as it were, the battle cry of more or less enlightened absolutism, which set out actively to shape an open future.

The conceptual change in political thought is evident if one looks at Machiavelli’s completely different, reactive, and defensive understanding of politics, which sought to preserve the state (*mantenere lo stato*). For him military expansion is a means of preserving the virtues (both martial and otherwise) of the citizens and, above all, the state. At the same time the latter must adapt to the changing demands of a constitutional cycle, demands which can be anticipated once one has thoroughly researched history and human behaviour through one’s own experience and through reading the ancient authors. In other words if one learns the lessons from both the recent and the distant past, one will be able to anticipate how things will go on (*historia magistra vitae*).<sup>4</sup>

For Montesquieu, on the other hand, expansion is one of the competencies of the state and regulated by international law. It corresponds to the natural right to individual self-defence. By expansion and other strategies the state can assert itself or adapt to changing times, but the course of things is not cyclical and, therefore, cannot be anticipated. For its part a state that is not up to date but corrupt or tyrannical is easily conquered, and this may perhaps be to the benefit of both the state and its subjects: “Un gouvernement parvenu au point où il ne peut plus se réformer lui-même, que perdrait-il à être refondu?”<sup>5</sup> Montesquieu uses *réforme* mostly in the conventional sense to mean that abuses – especially in the church – are rectified and an earlier state is restored. Another aspect is also important in *Esprit des lois*: *réforme* is the voluntaristic counterpart to *changement*. *Réforme* is based on clearly tangible political, in particular legislative, decisions (*décision*), while *changement* means barely perceptible change in customs and traditions that leads to imitation of models and fashions – and not to obedience through laws. In this context Montesquieu criticises Tsar Peter the Great because he forced his subjects to shave off their beards.<sup>6</sup>

Montesquieu expresses a fundamental problem. Reform is no longer a return to former, original, and thus better conditions but the legislative

shaping of the future. For this very reason, however, it must be legitimised in such a way that it contrasts as little as possible with the existing conditions and customs, which are based on tradition. Thus chapter 19.2 of his *Esprit des lois* explains that a people must be duly prepared even for the best laws that guarantee its freedom: “Pour les meilleures lois il est nécessaire que les esprits soient préparés.”<sup>7</sup> The legislator must never legislate against the “esprit général d'une nation”, i.e. against the geocultural and political *imprint* of a particular nation. Even less should he correct everything but leave the people essentially the way they are: “Qu'on nous laisse tels que nous sommes.”<sup>8</sup>

The challenge for the thinkers of the Enlightenment would be to combine the recognised need for future-oriented reform with the postulate of freedom as it was based in historical tradition and, more recently, in natural law. Its argumentative roots in Grotius are discussed in this volume by Johannes Süßmann in his reflections on contractual freedom. Montesquieu saw this freedom as a traditional European characteristic but also as endangered, if not already severely restricted, by the very rational and rationalising will of the absolute sovereign. This position was not restricted to the aristocratic Montesquieu, who mourned the political influence the nobility had had before Louis XIV. Already in 1694 Robert Molesworth had declared the aristocratic opposition's conviction, based on the “Gothic tradition”, that freedom is ancient and despotism recent in Europe: “All Europe was in a manner a free country till very lately.”<sup>9</sup>

Other authors give reasons that relate more to conservative inertia. In 1719, the Saxon Cameralist Julius Bernhard von Rohr (1688–1742) claimed for the prince the right to reform the state as if he were a doctor who intervenes to fight diseases. However, “the reform should be carried out in such a way that the state and the constitution of the common being, insofar as they are good, are preserved unharmed by it and no greater evils arise from it”.<sup>10</sup> This also requires restraint, even serenity, for the prince should “not always be resolute in improving the constitution of the commonwealth, but only in ensuring that it does not become worse”. In particular, reforms “should not be carried out abruptly and at once, but little by little, so that the minds get accustomed and led from one to the next in an unnoticed manner”. Even when it comes to improving the state the prince must not deviate from the “rules of justice”, i.e. from fundamental laws and earlier covenants, but also not impair the “present state” and “the present constitution”. “The means by which the *status publicus* is to be improved must be such that they do not run counter to natural law and equity, otherwise they taste of Machiavellian principles.”<sup>11</sup> The warning against Machiavelli, the mastermind of reason of State, makes it clear how firmly Rohr rejects the argument that the sovereign can create a better constitution if he reforms what is currently existing. Tradition remains the authority and it is not substituted by the prince.

According to Molesworth and Rohr, who differ heavily in other aspects, reform projects risked being associated with absolutism or despotism not only as innovations in individual areas but as a novel, systematic form of governance. Who, if not the prince, could best judge which institutions or persons did not function as efficiently as he wished? Yet who, apart from himself, really wanted state institutions to become more efficient, i.e. to collect taxes or raise armies despite opposition, to bring legal proceedings under the prince's control, or to abolish old customs? A look at the much-vaunted policy of tolerance of some rulers of the eighteenth century shows these dilemmas, which become clear in Avi Lifschitz's contribution. The *improvement* of the Jews, not as a social or economic question but as a legal one, enabled the state to regulate interventions in spheres previously reserved for the churches (public practice of faith) or communities (citizenship). Christian Wilhelm Dohm's understanding of love for the fatherland, or rather of the state, broke with conventional group loyalties and so it was indeed a radical reassessment when he declared, "the aristocrat, the peasant, the scholar, the manual worker, the Christian and the Jew is a *citizen* to a greater extent than his other identities".<sup>12</sup> The declared aim of such equality was equal subordination to the state authorities who would make the best out of a society's potential.

The consequences of such fundamental rational claims explain why even declared exponents of the Enlightenment were so reluctant when it came to reforms. According to the Dutch economic patriots, it was an essential characteristic of the "good citizen" that he "never wishes to see the state's constitution altered".<sup>13</sup> In the *Encyclopédie* Louis de Jaucourt followed Montesquieu's ideas when he wrote the articles "Innovation" and "Nouveauté", which are more informative than "Réforme". Jaucourt consciously defines *nouveauté*, without judgement, as any change, renewal, good or bad reform, whether beneficial or detrimental ("tout changement, innovation, réforme bonne ou mauvaise, avantageuse ou nuisible"). In the course of time institutions can deteriorate, as can the customs which were once appropriate to them and which later, out of habit, prevent innovations even if they would be good and useful. Therefore innovations should only be gradual and inconspicuous ("peu à peu & pour ainsi dire insensiblement") so that those affected are not taken by surprise and offended; those who lose something in a change will turn against the person who caused it. Therefore political improvements should not be introduced unless considerable hardship needs to be relieved and clear benefits can be demonstrated: "We must be careful that it is the enlightened desire to reform that attracts change, and not the frivolous desire for change that attracts reform" ("Enfin il faut prendre garde que ce soit le desir éclairé de réformer qui attire le changement, & non pas le desir frivole du changement qui attire la réforme").<sup>14</sup>

De Jaucourt's caution is also evident in the lemma "Innovation": a major change in politics that breaks with customs and constitutional

rules (“contre l’usage & les règles de sa constitution”). Laws and customs correspond, in Montesquieu’s sense, to the “génie d’une nation” and they are so firmly joined together that an innovation remains a foreign body, especially if it is introduced without careful consideration and based upon bad models. “The revolutions that time brings in the course of nature, arrive step by step; it is thus necessary to imitate this slowness for the useful innovations that one can introduce in the state.”<sup>15</sup>

Reforms are, therefore, necessary, but they are a radical solution that should be applied carefully and in clearly defined, manageable areas. Otherwise – as in the case of Peter the Great or, implicitly, Louis XIV – they will be perceived as tyrannical, which in turn weakens and endangers the state. Reforms are indispensable to steer the state into an unpredictable future but they are also dangerous if they too obviously break with the familiar past. In this case subjects or citizens will begin to worry about their privileges and property, even their lives. For where are the limits of a rule that respects no boundaries, even when it comes to insignificant issues such as the fashion of wearing beards? The much more far-reaching reform plans to increase the tax base by abolishing historical privileges and to distribute the burden more equally made France enter a crisis cycle in the 1780s, which led directly into the revolution.

As to Great Britain, its development was not without crisis but ultimately took place within the constitutional framework that had existed since 1689. So it comes as no surprise that David Hume introduced his *Idea of a Perfect Commonwealth* (1752) by declaring that proven and tested political customs are better than experiments based on philosophical speculation:

An established government has an infinite advantage, by that very circumstance of its being established; the bulk of mankind being governed by authority, not reason, and never attributing authority to any thing that has not the recommendation of antiquity. To tamper, therefore, in this affair, or try experiments merely upon the credit of supposed argument and philosophy, can never be the part of a wise magistrate, who will bear a reverence to what carries the marks of age; and though he may attempt some improvements for the public good, yet will he adjust his innovations, as much as possible, to the ancient fabric, and preserve entire the chief pillars and supports of the constitution.<sup>16</sup>

Innovations can be imagined but they should come along in the guise of the accustomed and should not call the existing constitution into question. Hume’s aversion to speculative philosophy was echoed in the Netherlands, by authors who discarded *innovation* as “projecting”, “scheming”, and thus related to gambling, foolishness, and fraud.<sup>17</sup> They all are, together with Montesquieu, De Jaucourt, and Hume, outstanding

examples of a cautious approach to reforms even among the *philosophes* who based their prudence in a very reflective historical and anthropological assessment.

### The Example of the Past: Venice

Venice is a telling case to illustrate that republics were probably even more resistant than monarchies to the discourses and practices of change, since the elite patricians did not want to accept a strong leader whose trenchant decisions might threaten the established yet fragile constitutional equilibria. Institutional changes had to be proposed most cautiously, as can be seen in Scipione Maffei (1675–1755) and his *Suggerimento per la perpetua preservazione della Republica Veneta*, written probably in 1736 and published only posthumously. What this erudite marquis from the subject city of Verona on the Terraferma described with negative connotations as “novelties” of the present time (“le novità a’ nostri giorni avvenute”) was the “exuberance” of the predominant European crowns and their despotic attitude (“l’aria dispotica”) towards weaker states, which they readily occupied and transferred to the rule of other dynasties. This had happened to Sicily, Sardinia, and other Italian territories in the wake of the peace treaties of Utrecht (1713) and Den Haag (1720).<sup>18</sup> To preserve Venice from decline and a similar fate Maffei suggested that the Serenissima should grant citizenship to noblemen from the Terraferma, like him, thus following the model of ancient Rome that had regularly created new citizens (*homines novi*, such as Cicero) in allied cities. If more inhabitants felt concerned and interested as citizens of Venice they would identify much more with the republic as a common cause and defend its liberty.<sup>19</sup>

However, Maffei wanted to extend participation only to about twenty noble families of the Terraferma, not to all the inhabitants of allied cities as the ancient Romans had done. He considered too large an extension of citizenship to be one of the reasons why Rome’s republican government (“popolar governo”) had been corrupted. Therefore he preferred the other model he referred to, i.e. England, the richest country in the world and the leading maritime power, which was a kingdom only by name: “the nation is free and is governed like a republic”. This astonishing reference, which sounds like Montesquieu *avant la lettre*, shows how contemporary states and societies potentially replaced the authority of the ancients because, as Maffei put it, the modern states and societies had been more successful than the ancients in enhancing their power and wealth (“assai meglio sono riusciti i moderni degli antichi”). When he stressed that Venice had to learn (“Bisogna imparar dagl’altri”) from other states and especially from republics, Maffei wanted to convince the Venetian senate that his quite radical idea of extending sovereignty to the noble families of the Terraferma should not be considered an innovation. Ancient

and modern history had proven that its outcome would be healthy. The reform could be introduced without the slightest alteration to the current institutions and system of government: “senza la minima alterazione [o cambiamento] del presente *insituto e* (sistema di) governo”. Maffei pleaded, in general, that inventions must be avoided in politics (“non si vuol far mai progetti d’invenzione”) because nobody could foresee their effects.<sup>20</sup> To those who could still blame him for suggesting an innovation (*novità*) Maffei answered that innovations must be avoided as long as circumstances do not impose them; but if circumstances change dramatically, prudence demands adaptations to the emergency. However, such adaptations should follow successful examples, and wherever possible those of Venice’s own ancestors.<sup>21</sup>

In Venice itself this reference to the past was almost a refrain. The future doge Marco Foscarini (1696–1763) praised the ancestors, “i nostri Maggiori”, for having well learnt the lesson of antiquity that excessive power always leads to ruin, as happened even to Rome when it was destroyed by internal conflict and vices. Peaceful moderation was at the heart of the civic perfection (“perfezione civile”) to which Venice had come as close as possible in the past.<sup>22</sup> The timeless myth of a constitution in equilibrium thus remained the point of reference for the Venetian elite in the eighteenth century, a constitution that needed not to be altered, therefore, but revivified if need be.<sup>23</sup> As late as 1782 Andrea Tron (1712–1785) maintained that governing Venice was reserved for patricians like him and ultimately consisted of nothing more than adapting laws and rules to changing circumstances and needs. That was always seen as an innovation (*novità*), but to lead Venice out of crisis, no innovations were needed. It would be enough for the patricians to refrain from warlike adventures and return to the model of the noble ancestors (“le antiche massime de’ nostri maggiori”) who had concentrated on trade.<sup>24</sup>

Like Maffei, Foscarini and Tron pleaded for reforms to be based on past models: either on the ancient Romans or even better on the Venetian ancestors. However Maffei concealed a concern with this postulate since he must have been aware that it actually broke with the conjured tradition. For the Veronese the reference to tradition was merely a rhetorical means of disabusing the Venetians in their own language conventions.

### Personnel Change, Institutional Improvement – or Just Dissimulated Ambition?

Around the middle of the century Philipp Joseph Count Kinsky advised Maria Theresia to make changes only with care and deliberation. In this book Gregor Stiebert contrasts him with Friedrich von Harrach who, however, also demanded that the ruler must observe the “old and well-established praerogative and privileges”.<sup>25</sup> Oberstkämmerer Khevenhüller saw a series of confusions spreading “once the *esprit de nouveauté*

had begun to rule". One can imagine how Maria Theresia or Prince Kaunitz struggled with such resistance, since the queen could imagine a "completely new institution" of the administration and a "better constitution . . . for the promotion of justice and the common good". Her chancellor even feared that the whole structure of the state would collapse if things were left as they were.

Significantly the means of abolishing the "creeping abuses" were not conceived of in terms of personnel changes but rather as a new institution set up from above, namely the Council of State, which was created in 1761 and was to remedy the grievances from the ground up. Similarly, presenting the barely known world of German universities, Johan Lange also shows how the argument shifted from grievances that could be attributed to individual offenders within a self-governing corporation to an abstract analysis of the institution. In this way state bodies attained the decisive role of constituent powers in perfecting the university as an institution, or even as a *factory*, by shedding the ballast of the past and directing the sciences towards the future welfare of the state and society.

Disputes over such reform projects took place everywhere as struggles within the political and intellectual elites. Some wanted to preserve personal privileges, rights, and direct personal connections, while others wanted to extend the ruler's scope for action through centralisation and juridification (and thereby also extend their own scope, as they served as counsellors or civil servants). For this purpose *improvement* (*Verbesserung* in German) was a less conflict-prone word than *reform* and was thus itself part of an authoritarian communication strategy, what the Cameralist Johann Heinrich Gottlob Justi tellingly suggested to the legislator in 1755 as a clarifying "improvement of language" ("Verbesserung der Sprache"). The article in Zedler's *Universal-Lexikon* defined "improvement" as the abolition of mistakes or bad manners and as "any effort to make up for a bad thing". However, the pretext (*Vorwand*) of improvement must not lead to laws being changed, distorted, or made more incomprehensible than before. New laws should clarify the old ones but should not modify or even replace them.<sup>26</sup> This way of thinking still set clear limits to any authority's reforming zeal since it was suspected to be nothing else than a false pretence for other, illegitimate aims which would enhance the ruler's power.

Machiavelli's bad reputation, as encountered above in Rohr and elsewhere, especially among more conventional authors, also stemmed from the fact that in the eighteenth chapter of *Il Principe* he had justified deception and dissimulation as political means. Accordingly there was an obvious suspicion that alleged reformers' talk of general improvements was only a cover adopted in order to conceal their own particular interests and, notably, the strengthening of authoritarian power. Lina Weber shows this with the example of the economic patriots, whose moral plea for the restoration of domestic consumption, which allegedly had

produced the past prosperity of the Netherlands, economically benefited themselves most and not the interests of foreign trade. A French critic wrote that those who needed the most reform themselves were screaming restlessly and loudly for reform of all possible grievances because they wanted to change everything except themselves.<sup>27</sup>

If sceptically observed *change* could gradually be perceived as positive *improvement*, it was not least because the gaze was turned away from the always flawed and fallible individuals and increasingly focused on institutions or – as it was often called – the *system*. Not only did firmly established and legally constituted institutions offer themselves better than passionate humans to rational analysis and lasting improvement. If shortcomings had been remedied once and for all within an institution it in turn made it possible to improve the individuals who worked for it and who therefore had to be ready to adapt to the modified institutional rules.

Such reflections led Friedrich Carl von Moser (1723–1798) in 1759 when he advised the prince that he should not carelessly deviate from the old “system” and choose a new one when he took office. Yet if the old structure of the state was apparently inappropriate and – from reliable experience – not worth “repairing”, he should undertake reform immediately when he took office. The obstacles to reform are less great at the accession of a new ruler, because the subjects are prepared for the fact that they will have to suffer changes at such a time. Nevertheless, he should declare his plan to be only a “project” so that he could withdraw from it, if necessary, without loss of honour.<sup>28</sup>

The same von Moser showed this in a later text, *Über die Regierung der geistlichen Staaten in Deutschland* (1787). For the ecclesiastic estates in Germany, he advocated “lasting improvements for the whole, transformation of land property, reforms, and if this word is not strong enough, revolution”. In fact during this period *revolution* became temporarily a synonym – with positive connotations – for an all-encompassing reform (*réforme universelle*) that was open to the future. Condillac, therefore, had already distinguished reform from the specific *correction* in the 1760s: “Pour corriger il suffit de faire quelques changements en mieux; pour réformer il faut tout changer.”<sup>29</sup> Further Condorcet declared in 1786, in stark contrast to Montesquieu shortly before, that legislation that followed the principles of enlightened reason regardless of any specific political constitution must be based everywhere on the same rational and natural principles and then would also produce everywhere the well-being of the people: “des lois . . . qui, toutes fondées sur la nature de l’homme et des sociétés, et déduites de ces principes par la raison doivent être partout les mêmes.”<sup>30</sup>

The experience of the *terreur* and war in turn led to a clear semantic distinction between evolutionary inevitable reform, which had to be politically controlled, and violent revolution, as a rupture with the

past, which had to be politically prevented. This was at least Edmund Burke's position in *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (1790) which was foremost responsible for this conceptual change, and not only in Great Britain. In his home country the institutions had been continuously reformed and for Burke this was the reason why there had been no revolution with all its fatal consequences. As Joanna Innes has shown, however, the word *reform* (instead of *reformation*) had only become a political-institutional concept shortly before, around 1780. It was an oppositional claim against the government, especially in the demand for "parliamentary reform".<sup>31</sup> In this volume Sebastian Meurer confirms and deepens this insight when examining the institutional implications of conceptual change. The conventional call for "reformation" had by definition left out the institutions that had to be considered impeccable as part of the "ancient constitution", even if they were temporarily impaired by the "corruption" of malicious individuals.

This constitutional conservatism changed only in the *Oeconomical Reform Debates* from 1779 onwards, when administrative reforms were expected to relieve both the national debt and the taxpayers. From then on *oeconomical reform* and *reform* in general, that could encompass the whole *system*, combined three institutional elements: parliamentary reform, administrative reform, and the consolidation of state finances. As an antonym to corruption *reform* thus became the solution to aberrations in both the moral-individual and institutional-systematic spheres, but the latter was the precondition of the former. Reforms thus should not only re-establish the commonwealth, but also promote it in the future, be it, if necessary, by far-reaching *improvements* or even *innovations*, since this word now had positive connotations. This was manifest in the definition, justification, and granting of public offices, where custom and individual privileges no longer secured claims against the criteria of efficiency and *rational reform*. Precedents and venerability, models and authorities, mere existence since time immemorial, lost their persuasive power, since times had changed and the political system had improved and therefore what had once been appropriate was required to prove that it still was so.

## Generating and Endorsing Reform in the Public Sphere

The *philosophes* had already shared such convictions for a considerable time but even in France these assumptions became the fundamentals of political language and action only relatively late, in the last quarter of the century. One reason was the *philosophes'* opposition to many aspects of the French constitution and royal policy, where *reform* seemed to be a code word for arbitrary decisions and mobilised all kind of resistance, especially among the privileged such as the *noblesse d'épée*. Although experts agreed that the French military desperately needed reform, the word itself could no longer be used after an ambitious reform programme

had failed in 1777. *Change, restoration, correction, mending, adjusting*, and other words were used instead to better express respect for traditional structures.<sup>32</sup> At the top level of the government the same reactions were manifest in the crisis of the 1780s, as Philippe Minard has pointed out.<sup>33</sup> When Turgot became minister in 1774, and thus the Enlightenment seemed to conquer the government, he tried to rebuild the economic system and base it on just principles, which should overcome blind opinion. This all-encompassing approach provoked opposition and mockery such as a satirical poem in 1775 which declared that everything was getting a new form and that all kinds of reforms were on everybody's lips: "Tout va prendre nouvelle forme, On ne parle que de réforme de mœurs, de temps".<sup>34</sup>

Although close to the *philosophes*, Jacques Necker took a different, and much more cautious, starting point from his (so to speak) predecessor Turgot by proclaiming his rejection of any system of ideas ("esprit de systèmes").<sup>35</sup> Instead he declared his attachment to experience and facts. Another crucial difference was the two men's appreciation of the general public; in Turgot's opinion, they were largely ignorant and in need of good guidance. Necker, on the other hand, wanted to inform and consult public opinion, because he believed it to be reasonable: The discourse of reform became one of enlightened opinion. In his treatise *De l'administration des finances de la France*, Necker explained in 1784 that no one can govern without the support of public opinion: hence his insistence on the necessity to publicise reforms, and especially on political pedagogy. In the preambles of his edicts he explicitly committed himself to public explanation. Devolving a decisive role in reforms to the provincial administrations meant establishing them as an institutional place of intermediation with society.

It was crucial for the positive revaluation of *reform* that it was not regarded as an absolutist project or, as in the case of Maffei, as a matter for a small group of noblemen or *philosophes* who were deliberately to exclude broader circles in order to guarantee efficiency and to avoid endangering established balances of power. The public sphere played a decisive role in two respects: It made controversial debates about plans and ideas for the future possible and thus legitimised the reforms much better than could the more arcane traditional policy. In order to achieve this legitimacy the public at the same time forced the actors into an increasingly transparent use of language. Reforms could no longer be concealed or glossed over with the agreement of a sovereign who was willing to promote change; they had to be named and explained to a conservative audience and justified, with all their conditions and consequences. Reform became less a question of authority than of popular education. Languages of reform as they are studied in this volume reveal how the insistence on often vague models in the past gave way to concrete and therefore criticisable indications about how the future could be

shaped if the analysis of the present time was freely discussed and clear evidence (*lumières* in French) emerged.

Thus, alongside or against the creative will of the absolutist ruler appeared what August Ludwig Schlözer called the “despotism of truth, of facts, of publicity”: “These are certainly terrible despots, all-powerful like sultans and pashas, and indomitable, as long as there are people who can think or just be ashamed.”<sup>36</sup> Not the sovereign’s arbitrary decision, but truth, should dictate and legitimise reforms in the future. In a growing number of states diversity of opinions was no longer seen as a threat to (revealed) truth but as a precondition of (recognised) truth. Since the public sphere evolved as a market of opinions, arguments in favour of speculation and reform could be deeply interconnected, as Christine Zabel’s contribution shows. Advocates of a reform of the French commercial regime stressed the parallels between the economic market and the public forum of debating reforms, both extending the temporal dimension into an unknown future and both depending on freedom of action.

Addressing the public sphere meant using easy and straightforward language in order to maximise the acceptance of reform projects even among uneducated people such as peasants, as in the Bernese case discussed by Lisa Kolb and Lothar Schilling. It proves how important it is to go beyond texts from and for the elites to understand the successes and failures of reforms, which depended very greatly on popular reception and judgement. Less erudite usages of abstract concepts must, therefore, be studied as well as the adaptation of less sophisticated vocabularies, especially in the vernacular, even if they are no longer used nowadays in the political realm. Examples in this book are *Verbesserung* or *Aufnehmen* in German or the different and sometimes conflicting moral, social, economic, commercial, and fiscal aspects of *luxury* as presented by Cecilia Carnino who, like Franco Venturi, studies the interaction of political concepts as used in France and in Italy. She shows how the *Théorie du luxe* turns into a critical, even revolutionary tool in publications that first used it only in a descriptive and normative manner.

Looking at eighteenth-century translations, especially from Latin and French but increasingly also from English to other vernacular languages, highlights the connotations of words and helps us understand the contemporary interpretations of terms and discursive patterns. As Theo Jung shows in his contribution to this book, contemporaries understood the linguistic precision of different nations as an indicator of the level of civilisation they had reached. In the *Encyclopédie* Diderot stated, “just by comparing the vocabulary of a nation in different times, one may form an idea of its progress.”<sup>37</sup> The very fact of comparison and translation was a sign of the universalisation and systematisation of reform: What is valid in one state or civilisation can be transferred to and adopted in another one. Reflections on reform thus went beyond the lessons of the past, be it the classical models of Greece and Rome or a state’s own

mythical golden age, as in the case of Venice. There was also a universalistic dimension when extra-European, and especially Asian, states started to be used as examples, such as the ploughing Chinese emperor in Susan Richter's chapter. On the other hand, the Ottomans also started to study foreign models in the late eighteenth century and promoted changes *à l'européenne*, which is the topic of Pascal Firges in this volume. The example of less distant states such as England or Prussia could not only be used to advocate change, however, but also to discredit reform issues as "servile" or "childish imitations" of unpopular neighbours, against whom many French officers wanted to defend their "national spirit" (and noble prerogatives), which becomes clear in the contribution of Isabelle Deflers.

Besides geographical outreach another way to emancipate a state from the past and to systematise reform concepts was utopian thought, which in the eighteenth century became more down to earth and more technical than the encompassing social visions of More and Campanella. Already in the early eighteenth century, John Toland, although an admirer of republics in the past and the present, declared, "Harrington's *Oceana* is, in my opinion, the most perfect form of popular government that ever was". Still, unlike the historical republics, *Oceana* had never existed – or not outside Harrington's mind. Yet his intellectual conception and perspicuity were able, according to Toland, to conceive "the History, Reasons, Nature, and Effects of all sorts of Government".<sup>38</sup> In 1754 David Hume considered *Oceana* in a similar way to be "the only valuable model of a commonwealth that has yet been offered to the public", while authors such as Plato and More had conceived "plainly imaginary" plans of government, supposing "great reformation in the manners of mankind".

Without discussing human manners and morals at all, Hume preferred to present some concrete institutions from existing republics such as Switzerland (militia) or the "wise and renowned government" of the United Provinces. Notwithstanding his aversion to speculations in political philosophy, as quoted above, the result of these empirical studies was a general plan that could be applied wherever one would want to erect a commonwealth: "Let Great Britain and Ireland, or any territory of equal extent, be divided into 100 counties." If the country was narrower or greater, Hume explained how much the number of counties had to be diminished or increased.<sup>39</sup> Thus the *Idea of a Perfect Commonwealth* became a rational model that could be applied everywhere with a few necessary modifications. Against his own will the concepts of perfection and perfectibility link the sober empiricist Hume to utopian thought, even though his pragmatic approach was deliberately limited to a few constitutional aspects and not to society as a whole.

Louis-Sébastien Mercier's utopian novel about Paris in the year 2440 (*L'An 2440, rêve s'il en fut jamais*) brought this idea of a perfect, i.e. rational, just, and moral society from a spatial into a temporal dimension,

giving long-term reform its direction. In the decades following the first edition Mercier was pleased to note which of his prognoses were realised: Reform had become a predictable project. In the third edition of 1798 he even claimed that his dream had announced and prepared for the French Revolution.

Never, I dare say, was a prediction closer to the event and at the same time more detailed on the amazing series of all these particular metamorphoses. I am therefore the true prophet of the revolution, and I say this without pride; providence gives each author in this world a good fortune.<sup>40</sup>

Mercier's providence was no longer reserved for God nor was it merely that of the *vates*, the ancient poet and seer. It was the result of precise observation and rational analysis of grievances for which human reason could invent and implement reforms.

## Reform Language and Revolutionary Rupture

When the reactionary Karl Ludwig von Haller, introduced in this volume by Béla Kapossy, looked back to the revolution and the *terreur*, he explained them by “the erroneous use of language” that had led to this regrettable temporary climax of the state's power of disposition, be it monarchical or republican. Haller lumped together Hobbes, Rousseau, Kant, and the Jacobins, since the concept of a social contract together with the republican terminology of Roman (private) law authorised the sovereign lawgiver to change the constitution at his will. To that end he might employ even violent means, but also the coercive strength of language: “The meaning of falsely applied words was forced onto things, whereas the terms ought to have been adapted to fit new circumstances.”<sup>41</sup> With respect neither for the anthropological and natural realities of the society nor for his own traditional moral and constitutional constraints and obligations, the sovereign could enhance his fiscal and military resources. Reform in the name of the common weal meant nothing more than expanding the state's authority to dispose of the nation's land and citizens, in the same way that Roman law had conceived of private property. At first it was enlightened despots such as Joseph II who implemented this reasoning, and then later the French republic, which was, thanks to popular sovereignty, far more absolute.

Contemporaries, and not only conservative ones, hence understood the ambivalence of languages of reform. On the one hand, their reasoning enhanced the sovereign's room for manoeuvre and, when the revolution broke out, the political participation of a growing part of the nation. On the other, everybody had to pay the price for growing public interventionism: more taxes and more legal constraints. As Wyger Velema shows

in this volume, sovereignty of the people, which was formally established in the United Provinces in 1798 and theoretically excluded the threat of monarchical rule by the stadholder, did not overcome the republican reservations regarding a unified and centralised political power. For their critics federalist separation of powers and direct-democratic procedures should tie back a representative government's addiction to reform to the will of a people that insisted on self-government and was sceptical about governmental initiatives, which always risked becoming expensive and over-adventurous.

It comes as no surprise that revolutionary language reacted to such reluctance with semantic shifts. For the early modern republics, the Swiss Confederation, and the United Provinces, *federalism* had been a constituent element, although the term had not yet been conceived. In French *confédération* or, in Montesquieu's words, *république fédérative* implied that its members united their forces in foreign and especially defensive policy while they remained autonomous in their internal affairs. As Manuela Albertone's chapter shows, *The Federalist Papers* (1787/88) introduced a rather confusing new aspect to the terminology, since the neologism *federalism* insisted on the augmented competences that the federation bestowed on the common institutions. Hence in the United States federalism came to signify a closer union and stronger government at the national level, while it denoted a defensive league with a weak government in the European tradition.

The French central state, which had grown under the monarchs and was legitimised and strengthened through revolutionary egalitarianism and popular sovereignty, opposed both the old European and the new American concept of what now was called federalism (*fédéralisme*). The Jacobins gave a negative ideological connotation to a term that previously had simply described a particular type of constitution (*fédération*) and had even held positive connotations for a spell during the revolution, especially in the 1790 *Fête de la Fédération*. When France became a modern republic, however, those who rejected the growing power of the new unitary central government were denigrated as *fédéralistes*, synonymous with secessionists and traitors. The Girondins, who were the main objects of this verdict against federalism, had promoted change and even very radical change since 1789. However, in the 1790s, the Jacobins claimed the omnipresent *révolution* and its practical constraints only for themselves, while *réforme* almost disappeared from public discourse. Languages of reform could no longer monopolise the claim for the betterment of the whole society by implementing rational insights into the nature of mankind. In times that asked for resolution they were associated with moderation and criticised therefore, becoming just one voice – and not always a very audible one – among many in a world split up among different political parties and ideologies, each with their own specific convictions on how change should be promoted and controlled.

## Notes

1. K.L. von Haller, *De quelques dénominations de partis, pour servir à l'intelligence des journaux et de plusieurs autres écrits modernes* (Geneva: Guers Père, 1822), 42. On Haller and this quote, see Béla Kapossy in this volume.
2. Haller, *De quelques dénominations*, 30.
3. R. Koselleck, “‘Space of Experience’ and ‘Horizon of Expectation’: Two Historical Categories”, in *Futures Past: On the Semantics of Historical Time*, ed. R. Koselleck and K. Tribe (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2004), 255–275.
4. R. Koselleck, “Historia Magistra Vitae: The Dissolution of the Topos into the Perspective of a Modernized Historical Process”, in *Futures Past: On the Semantics of Historical Time*, ed. R. Koselleck and K. Tribe (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2004), 26–42.
5. Montesquieu, “De l'esprit des lois”, in *Œuvres complètes*, ed. R. Caillois (Paris: Gallimard, 1949), 2:380–381 (10, 4). “When a government has arrived at that degree of corruption as to be incapable of reforming itself, it would not lose much by being newly moulded”.
6. Ibid., 564–565 (19, 14).
7. Ibid., 556 (19, 2). “That it is necessary people's minds should be prepared for the reception of the best laws.”
8. Ibid., 558–559 (19, 4–6). “Let them leave us as we are.”
9. R. Molesworth, *An Account of Denmark As It Was in the Year 1692* (London: Goodswin, 1694), Preface, <http://oll.libertyfund.org/titles/molesworth-an-account-of-denmark-with-francogallia-and-some-considerations-for-the-promoting-of-agriculture-and-employing-the-poor>. See also F. Venturi, *Utopia and Reform in the Enlightenment* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971), 53.
10. J.B. von Rohr, *Einleitung zur Staats-Klugheit, oder: Vorstellung wie christliche und weise Regenten zur Beförderung ihrer eigenen und ihres Landes Glückseligkeit Ihre Unterthanen zu beherrschen pflegen* (Leipzig: Martini, 1718), 549. See E. Wolgast, “Reform, Reformation”, in *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe: Historisches Lexikon zur politisch-sozialen Sprache in Deutschland*, ed. O. Brunner, et al. (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 2004), 5:340.
11. Rohr, *Einleitung*, 550.
12. For C.K.W. von Dohm, *Über die bürgerliche Verbesserung der Juden*, ed. W.C. Seifert (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2015), 19, see Avi Lifschitz's chapter.
13. See Lina Weber's chapter for “Een goed borger wenscht de gesteldheid van den staat niet veranderd te zien” (1779–1780).
14. L. de Jaucourt, “Nouveauté”, in *Encyclopédie ou dictionnaire raisonné des arts, des sciences et des métiers*, ed. D. Diderot and J. le Rond d'Alembert (Paris, 1751–1772), 11:265–266. <https://encyclopedia.uchicago.edu/>.
15. Jaucourt, “Innovation”, *Encyclopédie*, 8:755.
16. D. Hume, “Idea of a Perfect Commonwealth”, in *Political Essays*, ed. K. Haakonssen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 221.
17. See Lina Weber's chapter.
18. See the edition and interpretation in P. Ulvioni, *Riforma il mondo: Il pensiero civile di Scipione Maffei* (Alessandria: Edizioni dell'Orso, 2008), 371.
19. S. Maffei, in *Riforma*, 373–374, 381, 385, 395.
20. Ibid., 397–399.
21. Ibid., 413.
22. M. Foscarini, *Necessità della Storia e Della Perfezione della Repubblica*, ed. L. Ricaldone (Milano: FrancoAngeli, 1983), 151–155.

23. F. Venturi, *Settecento riformatore: da Muratori a Beccaria* (Torino: Einaudi, 1969), 1:286–292.
24. A. Tron, “*Serenissimo principe . . .*”. *Il discorso del 29 maggio 1784, davanti al Senato della Serenissima, come testamento morale dell’aristocrazia veneziana*, ed. P. Gaspari (Udine: Istituto editoriale veneto friulano, 1994), 112, 124.
25. See Gregor Stiebert’s chapter for Harrach and the Protocoll of the Conferenz, 29 January 1748, in: ÖZV II, vol. 2, 196, for the quote.
26. J.H. Zedler, *Grosses vollständiges Universal-Lexikon* (Leipzig; Halle: Zedler, 1746), 47: col. 86.
27. For L.-A. de Caraccioli, *Dictionnaire critique, pittoresque et sentencieux* (Lyon: B. Duplain, 1768), 8, see C. Dipper, “Réforme”, in *Handbuch politisch-sozialer Grundbegriffe in Frankreich 1680–1820*, ed. R. Reichardt, et al. (Munich: Oldenbourg, 2000), 19-20:122.
28. F.C. von Moser, *Der Herr und der Diener geschildert mit Patriotischer Freyheit* (Frankfurt am Main: Raspe, 1759), 79–80.
29. For É.B. de Condillac, *Œuvres philosophiques*, ed. G. Le Roy (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1951), 481; see Dipper, “Réforme”, 121.
30. N. de Condorcet, *Vie de M. Turgot* (London, 1786), 203.
31. J. Innes, “‘Reform’ in English Public Life: The Fortunes of a Word”, in *Rethinking the Age of Reform: Britain 1780–1850*, ed. A. Burns and J. Innes (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 71–97.
32. See the chapter from Isabelle Deflers in this volume.
33. P. Minard, “La ‘réforme’ en France et en Angleterre au XVIIIe siècle. Sens et fortunes d’un mot d’ordre”, *Revue d’histoire moderne et contemporaine* 56, no. 4 (2009): 9.
34. For Bachaumont’s letter see Dipper, “Reform”, 122. “Everything will take on a new form. We are just talking about nothing else than the reform of morals and of [our] time.”
35. Minard, “La ‘réforme’”, 9.
36. A.L. Schlözer, *Stats-Anzeigen* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1783), 5-20:516; see also W. Schulze, “Reform und Krise im Revolutionszeitalter”, in *Montgelas zwischen Wissenschaft und Politik: Krisendiagnostik, Modernisierungsbedarf und Reformpolitik in der Ära Montgelas und am Beginn des 21. Jahrhunderts*, ed. K. Weigand (München: Utz, 2009), 22.
37. For Diderot, *Encyclopédie*, 5:637, see the chapter by Theo Jung.
38. J. Toland, “The Preface”, in *The Oceana and His Other Works*, ed. J. Harrington (Dublin: Smith and Bruce, 1737), IX.
39. Hume, “Idea of a Perfect Commonwealth”, 222–223, 231.
40. L.-S. Mercier, *L’an deux mille quatre cent quarante* (Paris: Bresson et Carteret, 1798), Nouveau discours préliminaire.
41. K.L. von Haller, *Restauration der Staats-Wissenschaft* (Winterthur, 1820–1834; repr., Aalen: Scientia Verlag, 1964), 1:91; see Kapossy’s chapter for the context and further references.

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